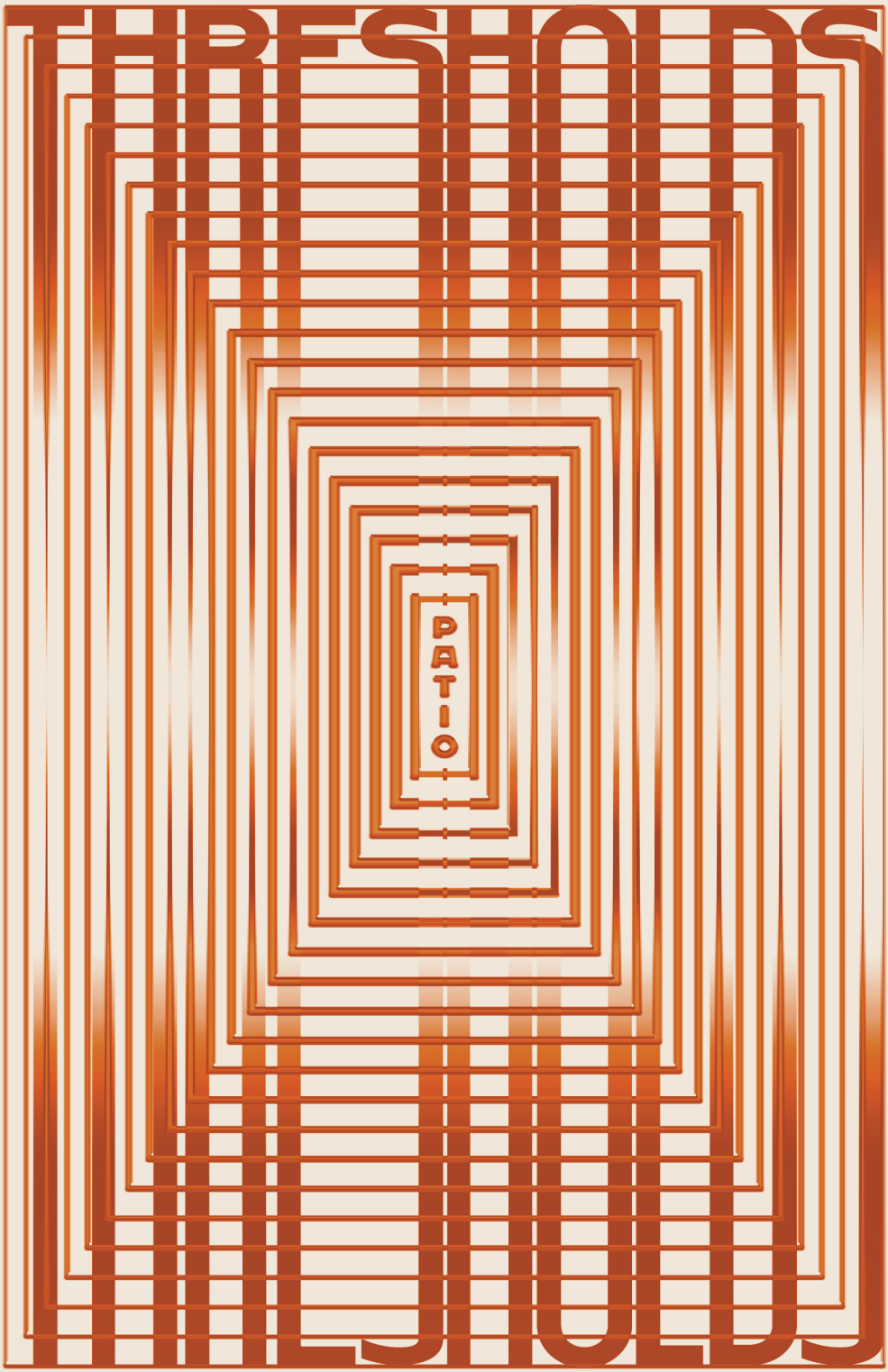

ISSUE 4

LUISA BRANDO

ESTUDIO RAMOS

TATIANA BILBAO

SUPRA ORDER

VERUSKA VASCONEZ

ANTONIO YEMAIL

CAZÚ ZEGERS

PABLO USECHE

LANZA ATELIER

MARCOS ESCAMILLA

JAIME CORREA

OBRA COMÚN

AL BORDE

SEBASTIÁN SERNA

FERNANDA CANALES

ALEX HUDTWALCKER

ANDREA ZAMORA

“A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something begins its presencing.”

-Martin Heidegger,
Building Dwelling Thinking (1951)

Patio Magazine

Issue 4 : Thresholds
Spring 2026

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Special thanks to **Hugo Sarmiento**, who served as Faculty Advisor for this issue, and to **Patricio Muñoz Baeza** for being our Alumni Advisor.

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Editorial Note:
An Exploration of the In-Between

Words by Nicolás Garcia and Patio Magazine Editorial Team

Across Latin America, life often unfolds within conditions of overlap: between the formal and the informal, the private and the public, the built and the natural. *Cities expand through contradiction and coexistence, where infrastructures remain unfinished, boundaries are constantly negotiated, and everyday life adapts to instability with creativity and resilience. In these contexts, thresholds emerge not simply as divisions, but as spaces of encounter where tension becomes dialogue and limits turn porous. They imply movement, transition, exchange: moments where one condition gives way to another without ever fully disappearing.*

Thresholds are not fixed lines but living conditions, spaces where things meet, mix, or collide. *They are physical and temporal, personal and collective. They appear in the doorway between street and home, in the edge between land and water, in borders crossed by migration, in conversations that bridge generations, languages, and identities. They exist within memory, territory, and social life. To inhabit a threshold is to inhabit transformation itself: to engage with uncertainty, negotiation, and the instability through which new realities are continuously formed.*

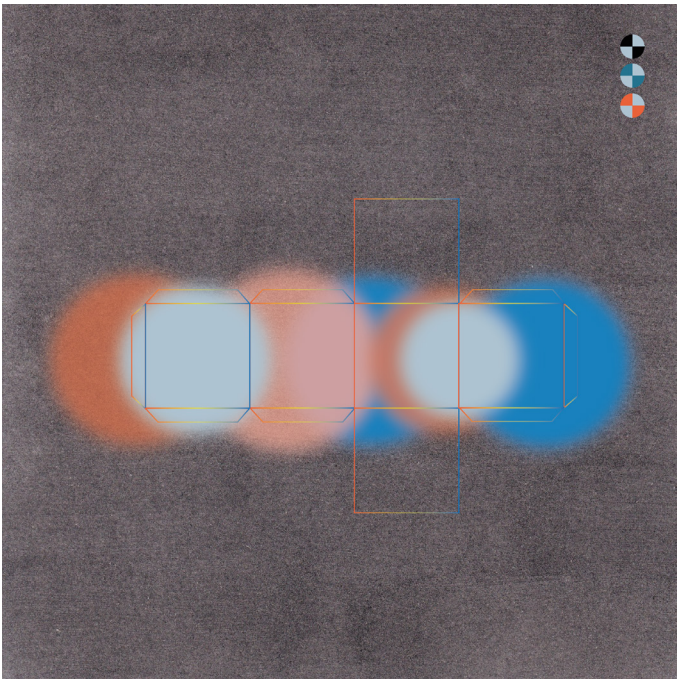
Spatial practices across the built environment have long been concerned with thresholds as sites of transition, but within the Latin American context they also become political, cultural, and environmental conditions. *They reveal systems of inequality and exclusion, while simultaneously creating opportunities for exchange, resistance, and collective imagination. Thresholds can separate, but they can also connect. They can protect, expose, mediate, or dissolve. In moments of rapid urbanization, environmental crisis, displacement, and shifting social structures, these in-between conditions become increasingly central to how we understand the spaces we occupy and the futures we attempt to construct.*

This issue reflects on spaces of encounter, overlap, and friction where new relationships emerge. *Through essays, conversations, projects, images, and reflections, Thresholds explores the productive ambiguities that shape contemporary life across Latin America and beyond. What forms of architecture, identity, and community emerge when boundaries no longer hold? What happens when crossing ceases to be temporary and becomes a permanent condition?*

On Relation, Form, and the Fiction of Separation

Words by Luisa Brando

***Luisa Brando** is a Colombian architect, artist, and researcher whose work moves across architecture, visual art, landscape, and territorial research. Her practice explores the relationships between ecology, heritage, water, and public space, often questioning the boundaries between nature and culture. Educated at Universidad de los Andes and Harvard GSD, Brando has developed an interdisciplinary body of work through research, teaching, exhibitions, and installations across Latin America, Europe, and the United States. Her projects investigate how architecture and artistic practices can reshape the way we perceive territory, conservation, and living systems.*



**All images are provided by the author from her latest work, Fragmentos de "Un cuadrado que quería dejar de serlo"*

We speak of the “in-between” as if it named a place, or perhaps several.
As if there were a delicate strip, situated between things already given.

Perhaps it is the other way around.

“Perhaps what we call things —disciplines, territories, even forms— are only momentary stabilizations of a prior relation.”

Let us attend to a river.

A river is often thought of as that which runs between two banks.
And yet, with some patience, it becomes clear that the banks do not
contain the river: they appear with the river.

The edge does not precede the river.
The river, by insisting, makes the edge visible.

And still, the edge is never fixed.
It yields, shifts, remakes itself.

What we understand as a limit may not be a line, but a field of relations, some visible, most not.

But transformation does not belong only to movement.

A plant unfolds differently.
Not by advancing, but by varying.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe approached plants through what he called a
delicate empiricism:
a way of seeing that does not isolate form from process,
but remains with phenomena long enough for transformation to appear.

In that attention, the leaf is not a fixed unit,
but a variation across states.

There is no clear point where one form ends and another begins.
Only thresholds, difficult to locate precisely.

If the river unsettles the idea of boundary,
the plant unsettles the idea of identity.

Both suggest that what appears stable
is sustained by continuous transformation.

Something similar occurs in the way we divide knowledge.

Disciplines present themselves as distinct,
as if they preceded their relations.

But perhaps they are not origins,
but the result of continuous encounters,
where each contact increases variation.

Not what is crossed,
but what grows through repeated encounters.

I work in that condition language insists on calling the
“in-between.”

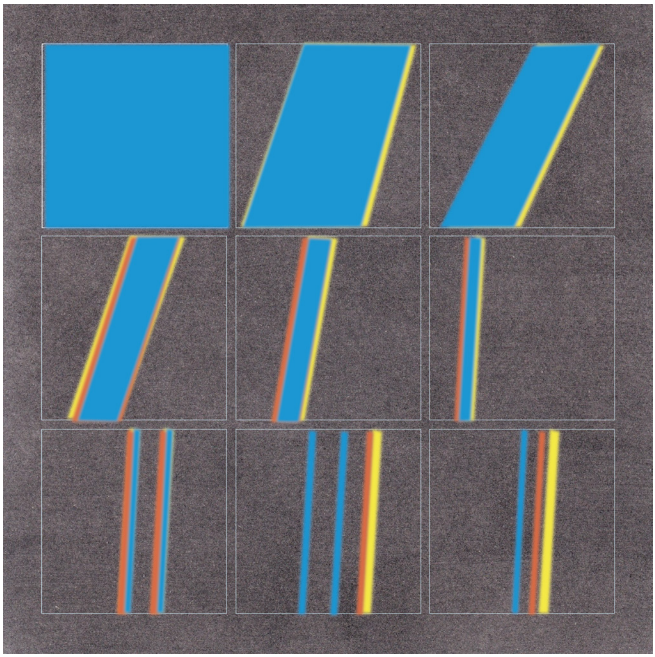
Not as a position,
but as a way of operating.

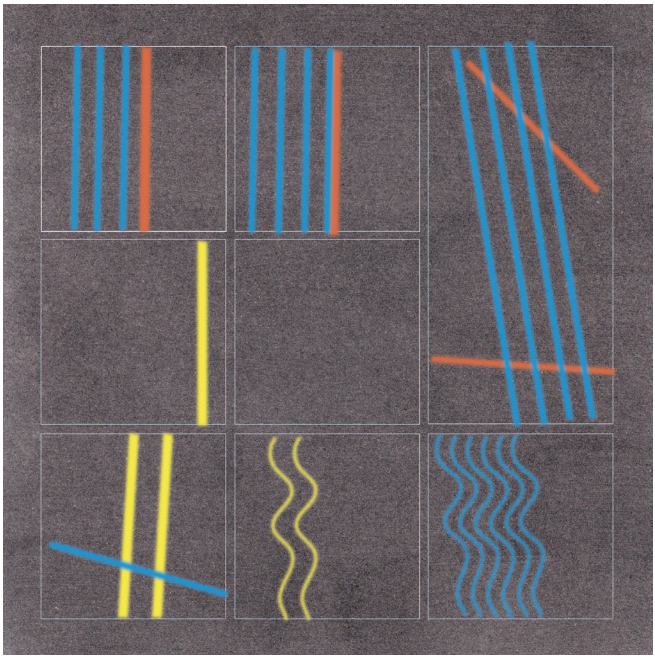
Between drawing and matter,
between image and landscape,
between space and graphic design,
between architecture and thought.

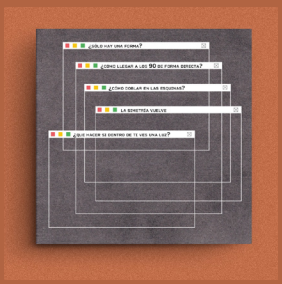
These are not separate fields I move across,
but different expressions of the same inquiry.

To work from the in-between is not to combine,
but to remain attentive to relation.

To allow form to emerge from contact.
As in the river, where boundaries remain in flux,
or in the plant, where form is always becoming.

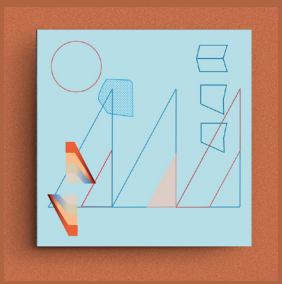


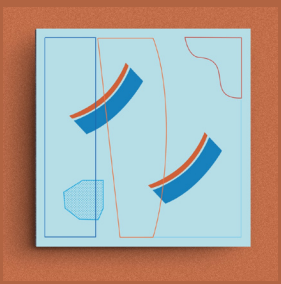


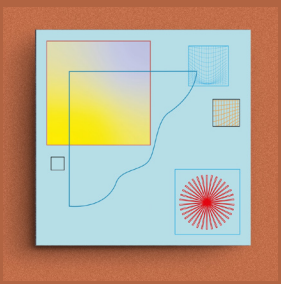

¿SOLO HAY UNA FORMA?
¿CÓMO LLEGAR A LOS 90 DE FORMA DIRECTA?
¿CÓMO DOBLAR EN LAS ESQUINAS?
LA SEMETRÍA VUELVE
¿QUÉ HACER SI DENTRO DE TI VES UNA LUZ?

¿QUÉ HACER SI DENTRO DE TI VES UNA LUZ?

Y LO INFINITO.

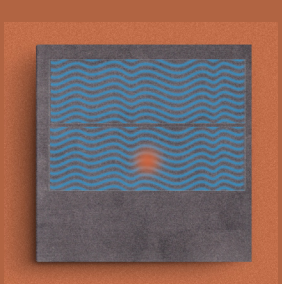


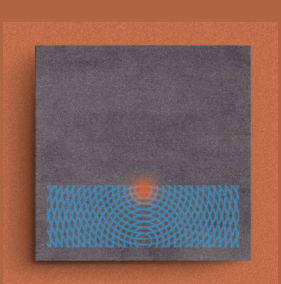




SIN EMBARGO, EN LO MÁS PROFUNDO DE SU COMPRADO, SOLO SE ENTENDE UNA LUZ, UNOS COLORES QUE LO LLEVARON A VIAJAR ADENTRO, ASÍ CONOCE TODO Y HACE DIMENSIÓN.

Y se transforma en flor
y luego en lluvia
se mirará una nube
y luego en pájaro.
Se convertirá en cebolla
y en una lámpara.
Por supuesto.
y se fue a volar.





¿CÓMO ENCONTRAR TU PAZ?

Perhaps that is why the word “in-between” feels insufficient.
Because it suggests a position where there is, in fact, a condition.

It does not indicate a place,
but a way of being.

The opposite of the in-between is not an extreme.
It is the fiction of the isolated.

The idea —so persistent, and yet so fragile— that something might exist
on its own, without relation.

That fiction takes many forms:
disciplines that declare themselves autonomous,
territories imagined as closed,
practices that imagine themselves independent.

And yet, it is enough to observe water, or the growth of a plant,
to see that nothing sustains itself in isolation.

To live and work from within the in-between
is not to dissolve boundaries,
but to recognize them as sites of encounter.

To understand that every form is porous.
That every practice is shaped by what it touches.

That meaning does not reside in things themselves,
but in the relations that make them possible.

Innovation House:
Thresholds for Interdisciplinary Learning

Text written by Estudio Ramos

***Estudio Ramos** is an architecture studio based in Buenos Aires and New York known for its modernist approach, emphasizing ideal scale, sustainability, and a refined, context-responsive architectural language developed over more than 45 years of work in residential and commercial projects. Founded in 1990 by Juan Ignacio Ramos, a graduate of the University of Buenos Aires, the firm has completed over 400 projects across multiple continents and has been exhibited at La Biennale di Venezia in 2016 and 2020. Today, the studio's design direction is led by Juan Ignacio Ramos alongside partner Ignacio Ramos, who joined in 2007 after studying at Florida Atlantic University, the Bauhaus Dessau Foundation, and Columbia University, and who oversees projects from initial concept through final documentation.*

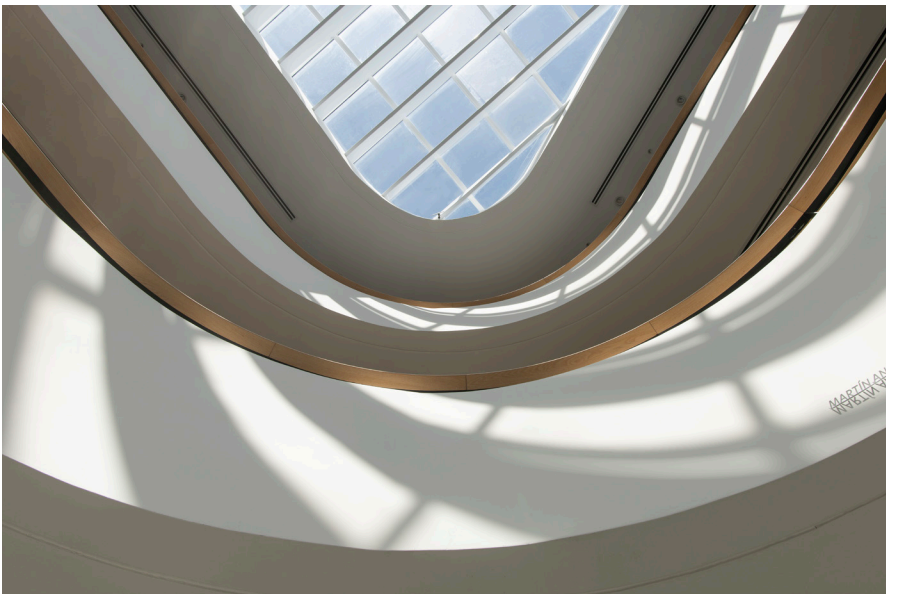
Estudio Ramos, Innovation House, Exterior View
Photos by: Daniela Mac Adden

Estudio Ramos, Innovation House, Exterior View
Photos by: Daniela Mac Adden

Innovation House is part of a broader transformation of the campus of the University of San Andrés, where Estudio Ramos was commissioned to develop a masterplan for an already consolidated site. Rather than introducing isolated objects, the strategy focuses on strengthening relationships between existing buildings, landscape, and patterns of use, understanding the campus as a continuous system in evolution.

The process began not with form, but with listening. Through a series of in-depth interviews with more than thirty members of the university community, including students, faculty, alumni, administrative staff, maintenance teams, and leadership, the Estudio Ramos team conducted a sociological reading of the institution.

One of the most striking findings was the strong sense of belonging and pride shared across all groups. However, this collective identity lacked spatial expression: there were few places on campus where this sense of community could gather, manifest, or be celebrated.

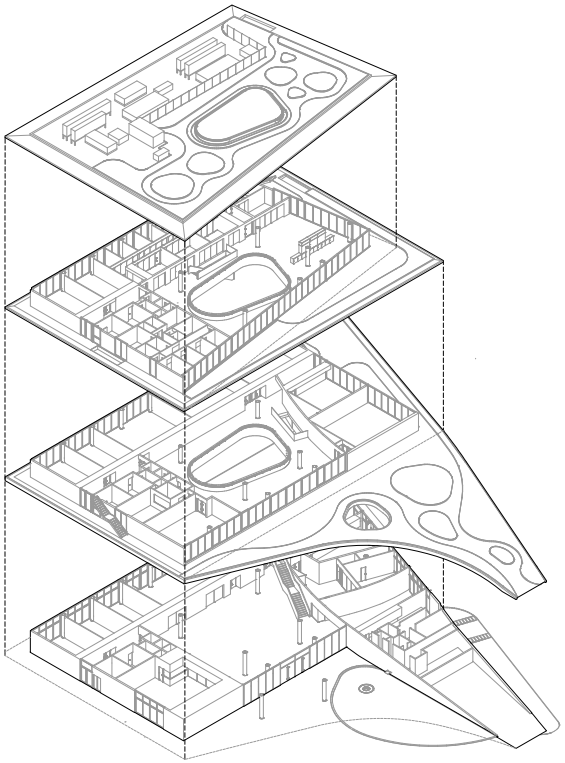


Estudio Ramos, Innovation House, Atrium View
Photo by: Daniela Mac Adden

The project is organized around a central, triple-height atrium that functions as a flexible collective space. Daily, it operates as an open common area, but it can transform into an auditorium for over 700 people. This adaptability reflects a key premise of the project: to blur the boundaries between academic, social, and institutional activities.

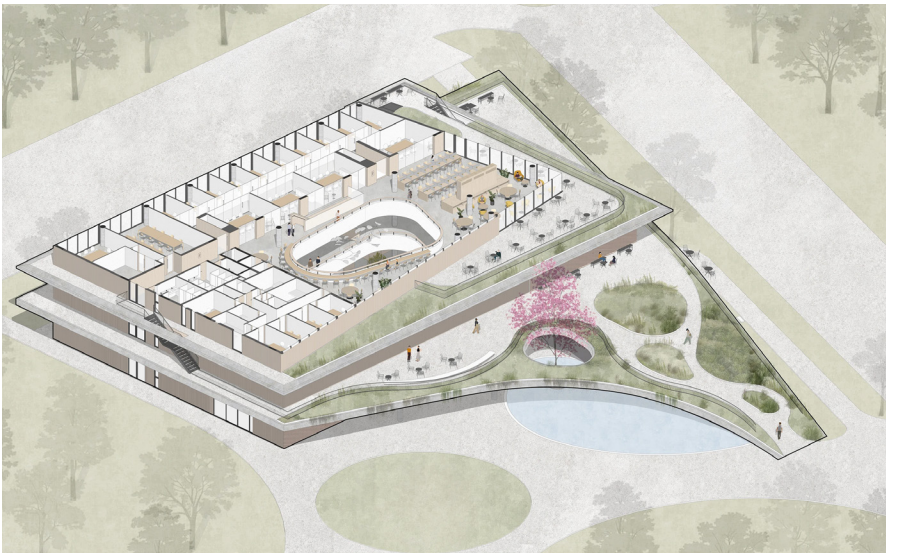
Rather than conceiving circulation as mere movement, the building expands it into a system of thresholds. Ramps, intermediate levels, and open connections structure a continuous spatial experience, encouraging encounters across users and disciplines. Circulation becomes inhabitable: spaces of pause, exchange, and visibility rather than mere transition.

A planted ramped roof extends the campus's main pedestrian path, offering alternative access and reinforcing the building's integration with everyday campus life. In this sense, the building is not approached as an object, but as a piece of topography, an extension of the ground that can be walked, occupied, and experienced collectively.



Estudio Ramos, Innovation House, Exploded Axonometric

Estudio Ramos, Innovation House, Reflecting Pond View
Photos by: Daniela Mac Adden



Estudio Ramos, Innovation House, Axonometric
Photos by: Daniela Mac Adden

The relationship with the surrounding landscape is central to the project. Located near the Luján River and within the ecological system of the Paraná Delta, the building engages a context defined by water, vegetation, and horizontality. Rather than establishing a clear boundary, the project operates through gradients: green terraces, planted roofs, and large openings allow the landscape to permeate the architecture.

A reflecting pond marks the main access, acting as both a physical and symbolic threshold. It mediates arrival, slows down movement, and establishes a visual and atmospheric connection with the nearby river. Water, in this sense, becomes an element of transition: between campus and building, between movement and pause, between the constructed and the natural.

Materially, the project balances continuity and transformation. The use of brick, shared with the existing campus buildings, anchors the new intervention within its context, establishing a cohesive and familiar language. This is complemented by exposed concrete and wood, which introduce a contemporary tectonic expression while maintaining a restrained and durable palette.

As part of the masterplan, Innovation House acts as an active threshold within the university: a space where disciplines intersect, where formal and informal learning overlap, and where the boundaries between building, landscape, and community are continuously redefined. More than a container of programs, it is an infrastructure for collective life, where the identity of the institution finds, perhaps for the first time, a spatial form.

Estudio Ramos, Innovation House, Exposed Concrete and Brick View
Photos by: Daniela Mac Adden

Interview:
Collage, Thresholds, and the Latin American City

Tatiana Bilbao in conversation with Nicolás García & Sofía Paniagua

Tatiana Bilbao *founded her studio in 2004 with a focus on socially driven, collaborative, and research-based architectural practice. Her work explores diverse urban conditions and crisis reconstruction through sensitive design approaches. Before establishing her firm, she worked as an advisor for urban development in Mexico City. Bilbao has taught at institutions including Yale, Harvard GSD, Columbia GSAPP, and Rice University, and her work has been widely published internationally. She has also received numerous awards and recognitions for her contributions to contemporary architecture and sustainable design.*

Ponde de Montreuil, Tatiana Bilbao Estudio, 2019 - ongoing

Nicolás: *As I'm sure you know, LatinGSAPP is a student organization at Columbia, and an important part of it is the magazine, Patio. For this edition, the theme is thresholds. Obviously, it has a very physical connotation, like the image of what a threshold is, and let's say if you wanted to make a puzzle of the pieces that make up architecture, this would be one of those pieces. But beyond that physical element, we wanted to explore the idea of the threshold from a more philosophical perspective, that condition of crossing, of encountering two different conditions. And in that encounter, in that dialogue, there's even a bit of friction: What kinds of things emerge? What kind of exploration can be done? It seems like a beautiful and relevant theme to us, especially for the Latin American context. And so, in that vein, we obviously think your perspective is extremely valuable for the magazine. So, one question that felt almost mandatory is precisely that idea of the threshold. We wanted to know how you understand it, not just as an element, but as this living condition of encounter, as a temporal space.*

Tatiana: Well, for me, architecture has always been and is a process. It's not an object, and therefore, it's always in that condition of encounter, always in that threshold condition in a way. I mean, it's a process that's always in a constant condition of crossing through places, moments, spaces, histories ... histories, above all, that's what threshold means to me.

Sofia: *And thinking a bit about that and about this process you're describing, we wondered where this concept comes to you from, the concept of the threshold, whether it comes only from architecture or also from other places. Because the threshold, this idea of transition, negotiation, transformation, can also appear in art, literature, dance, cinema, ritual. It's not an exclusively architectural concept. So, we wondered what other disciplines or forms of knowledge have informed your way of thinking about thresholds? If any unexpected sources have changed the way you might approach a project?*

Tatiana: The truth is, to be honest, I had never thought about it as such. Right now, we're talking about it and trying to decipher it, but I had never thought about this the way I'm saying it now. But without a doubt, it's that passage you pass through and transit. In relation to a threshold, I think it can even be compared to the career of the person doing it, and therefore, it's always there. If we're talking about the threshold as a philosophical element and not as

If we're talking about it as the place where you transit, where you pass through, where you give – it's everywhere, in the process of everything. It's definitely not exclusive to architecture.

Sofia: *Yes, totally agree. And speaking of tools for thinking, there's one that seems very particular to us in your process, which is your method of using collage. You use collage as a working tool and not just a presentation method. As a technique, collage tends to juxtapose different times, scales, and registers in the same image without pretending they fully merge; they coexist more or less in tension. Is there coherence between that way of representing and the way you think about projects? How does collage operate in your process to integrate and think about different types of thresholds: between the built and the natural, between the domestic and the urban, between the existing and the projected?*

Tatiana: Well, it's not just a correlation, it's exactly what it is. Right from the start, I understand myself as collage. I don't see it as an external condition, but as part of what I am. We are collage. In the office, we think of ourselves as collage from the outset, right? We are the construction of many parts; we are that juxtaposition of elements that has built us throughout our entire history, throughout our entire existence, through everything we've lived and learned, known, recognized, understood, etc. We are collage. In the office, we're a group of extremely different individuals who all bring a possibility to the table, an idea, a conversation. So, we are a collage, and the truth is, I've always hoped for our architecture to read as a collage. A collage is an image in which we can all represent ourselves because you'll always interpret it according to your own condition, and that alone is the possibility of being able to represent yourself in the image.

I would like my architecture to function exactly like that, so that you could represent yourself in it, so that it could be that space where, if you remove something, it continues to exist. That possibility can exist too; that space you interpret, you don't necessarily read it the way someone else did. In a way, therefore, it's absolutely connected; it's fundamental. We truly believe that we are collage and that our architecture is a collage. Besides, if you think about it very literally, we can also say it's the sum of the juxtaposition of many elements. The sum of a rebar, a piece of concrete – which is also a sum of elements – a piece of wood, or glass ... I mean, it's a juxtaposition of elements, but I'd also like it to be understood the way a collage is understood. So, without a doubt, it's not that it's the same thing, it's that it is in itself a collage.

Nicolás: *That's such a beautiful phrase – that you understand the office as a collage and the richness that comes from differences, ultimately, the different perspectives, the different viewpoints that each person can contribute from their own history. Taking this same idea a bit further, it seems to us that this also speaks a lot to the Latin American context and what it means to practice as an architect in Latin America. I remember Sofia and I were talking when we were preparing the magazine's theme and preparing the interview, and we concluded that very particular things happened in Latin America.*

And so, you have to kind of live in uncertainty, a bit in transition. It's not so much a problem to solve, and it's not so much something you pass through, This instability and constant change isn't interpreted the way it might be in places like the United States or Europe, which would be like crossing through this to get to something more formalized and consolidated. Rather, in Latin America, it's more about expanding it and inhabiting it in itself as something very rich, something full of possibilities, full of precisely that same richness we were talking about. So, we wanted to know how you think about designing architecture in that kind of context – without necessarily fixing, without closing, without defining things so much. How do you design from that instability without necessarily fighting against it? without necessarily fighting against it?

Tatiana: It seems like a very important opportunity to me. I think it's precisely where you can allow the other to exist. If architecture is completely – or if society in general – is completely determined and defined, very little fits. The other doesn't exist.

In Latin America, I think precisely that condition, which I embrace very much, allows the other to exist. It's where the possibility has come from to understand architecture from many angles. In places like Europe, everything is extremely determined and it is what it is, and from Latin America have come the possibilities of understanding architecture from another place. In another way, with other processes, that it can be made from a collage, for example, that it can be made from a community, that what wasn't made by a professional who graduated from a prestigious university can be called architecture. I think that's where, for me, architecture exists. The way I understand it and see it, I think that's where the possibility exists to make that architecture where we all truly fit, and that possibility is what I embrace.

Nicolás: *And also regarding the informal city, which, for us who grew up and live in Latin America, is an extremely interesting topic can happen in the United States or in Europe, where it's more defined, and the architect's role more established.*

Botanical Garden, Tatiana Bilbao Estudio, 2004 - ongoing

and something we constantly live with. The topic of adaptive reuse, for example, these are themes that architects in Latin America have been working on for a long time. And, precisely, the role of the architect is extremely broad, in contrast to what can happen in the United States or in Europe, where it's also much more defined, and the architect's role is much more established.

Tatiana: Precisely. I think that – first of all, I don't like using the word "informal," right? Because who defines what's informal and what's formal? Life isn't informal or formal. Although it's very difficult to name it, I don't think there are informal human beings, or illegal ones, or anything, because who defines legality, or who defines informality? Why does someone have the right to decide that? There isn't a specific word, but it's that which can't be made without the determined processes.

The same thing happens with the economy: people say, "No, those people are in the informal economy." What is the informal and the formal economy? Who decided it, and why is one called that and not the other? Because it's also used pejoratively, which is the worst of all, but they're just different processes, and I think that for me is the principle. I think thanks to the lack of definition of many things in our cities, the possibility of the other is allowed. The conditions may not be ideal, and I'm not romanticizing this either, but on the other hand, the determination, the ultra-planning, the extremely prescribed processes that exist in what we'd call the "formal city" somehow allow far fewer people to exist there.

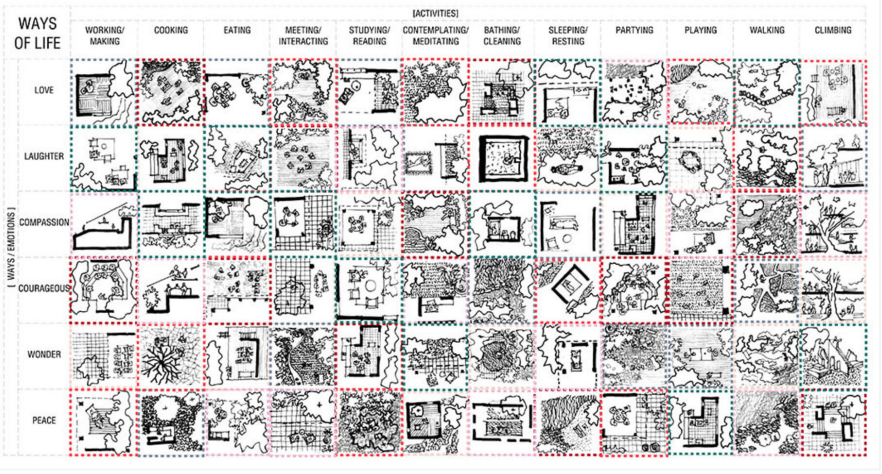
In a way, the possibility of leaving the city's condition more open allows many more possibilities for the future.

Tornel 34, Tatiana Bilbao Estudio, 2022 - ongoing

Again, I'm not idealizing it; there are many, many problems in that city, too, just like with the other one, and they're different, and maybe if we can call them better or worse, well, they're worse. But I think if we could sustain ourselves there, it would be incredible. Ever since I was invited to do a project in China, which was at the very beginning of my career, I was really struck when I arrived and realized that people in China had very recently gone from never having had a landline to everyone having a mobile phone in their hands. They connected everyone through a phone, and everything was suddenly hyperconnected. In a way, my question wasn't that everyone should have cell phones, but how could we take advantage of that condition where there were never phones with cable lines strung throughout the cities to generate an alternative possibility?

And so, it's the same question I ask myself in our cities, that condition that's not ideal, not of informality, etc., how can we take advantage of it so the city doesn't become this hyperdetermined place. As we see it in other contexts, but instead allows the possibility for everyone to fit there without that imposition? With that condition of opportunity that we have in Latin American cities, but without the imposition that European cities have.

That is, how can we take advantage to generate a much more equitable platform with more opportunities for everyone, and not through determination?



Ways of Life, Tatiana Bilbao Estudio, 2017 - ongoing

Nicolás: *Totally. We also see it as a source of opportunities, an extremely rich source of knowledge. When we were looking at these projects, we found "Ways of Life". We thought it was beautiful. So we wanted to talk about making room for different ways of inhabiting the city, of living that plurality inherent to public space, but also about something really captivating in Latin American architecture, which is that gradient of thresholds and privacy in the domestic environment — all those spaces, those transitions and moments from the street to the bedroom. We wanted to know how you see that sequence?*

Tatiana: Those spaces seem necessary to me because they're the ones that determine the possibility of relating to the other space in a much richer way. If we eliminate those spaces, it becomes a continuous fluidity that doesn't necessarily help you understand them. And in a Latin American city, I also see it as all those moments of possibility that are in transition, like those things that want to evolve into something else but aren't there yet. Right now, we're doing a project in Germany that's a monastery. In a monastery, the most beautiful thing is that the space is designed so the monk can never expose himself from that condition of absolute intimacy to total collectivity, so there are always these transitional spaces, thresholds that allow you to pass from a more intimate, more individual, more personal place to a more collective space.

So, you're always transiting from your cell, your body, to the cloister, to the chapter house, to the church, and those transitions are always very physical, very specific, and very necessary. That possibility is what allows the monk to have this life that can generate that process to relate to the other, or to relate to his soul, and be able to live this super spiritual, intimate, and unique life. That possibility exists thanks to the transition within these thresholds, and that's what I like about their possibility in the Latin American city, because you go from being completely exposed in the exterior to a transitional space between that exterior and that interior, to the more sheltered interior. The same thing happens in the monastery, and it seems to me a fundamental element to be able to generate these relationships.

Nicolás: *Without a doubt, and for the sense of community, neighborhood life, like being able to see your neighbor, meet up and chat, I think those social dynamics are also super important, and sadly, in many parts of cities, they've been lost a bit.*

Tatiana: Besides, what I really like is that we can also talk about Latin American cities as being a threshold. Thresholds are also those places where we leave one place and begin another, so it's where you encounter one, where you leave one existence and transit toward a new one. So, you can also think that Latin American cities are there, in that place where they're transiting from one way of existing to another.

Sofia: *What you were mentioning also made us think a bit about the spaces*

Unraveling Modern Living
Tatiana Bilbao Estudio, 2019-2020

(Not) Another Tower
Tatiana Bilbao Estudio, 2017

where that kind of investigation is possible and how academia can be one of those spaces that, in itself, we interpret a bit as a threshold, right? But what this question is getting at is that in the academic realm, you've been developing studios on housing, rights, and domestic life for several years – studios that suggest that academia is a space of exploration that is not only formal but also more conceptual, almost speculative. And so, we wanted to know what can be done in that space that can't be done in the professional studio, if there are ideas that were born in the classroom and ended up transforming a real project, for example.

Tatiana: For me, academia isn't a space removed from practice, especially in mine, it's always been connected. I'm here at Yale right now, and they were asking me what impact these 11 years I've been here have had on my career, and I can't imagine it without, I mean, it's never separate. I can't imagine doing what I'm doing if I hadn't been at Yale for all these years, in no way, in no form. I've always seen academia as an extension of my work, as an integral part of it. For me, coming here means being able to generate conversations with more people, with other people, and that's what has allowed me to do what I do today. I can't tell you what impact it's had specifically, because it can't be described, because it's everywhere, it's in every moment. I don't come here to teach; I come here to learn.

And I come here to learn through processes that are perhaps kinder than those that happen in the life of the office, because they have more space and more time, in a way. So that allows reflections to be made from another place, and that helps us feed those reflections into the projects, but the projects also help us feed these reflections that are made at school. So, for me it's like a ... It's the same thing that allows me to exist as I am today, for better or worse, right? I think for the better, definitely, without a doubt.

Sofia: *Yes, no, totally. And also speaking a bit about this theme of learning and how you keep learning new things, just as we wanted to ask you about academia, we also wanted to ask you about the discipline, about professional life, because architecture today faces simultaneous pressures: the climate crisis, inequality, the collapse of housing as a right, the speed of technological transformation, among various things ... And we wanted to know, from your practice, your research, and your teaching too, where do you think the discipline should move towards, and what would the architect trained in the 20th century have to unlearn to be relevant at this moment, in a time like today?*

Tatiana: Well, that's exactly where the relevance of Latin America comes in. I think you must unlearn the idea that there's only one way to do architecture and that's it. Today, thanks to these countries and these conditions, we've understood that architecture is many things, and very different ones.

One of them is the definition that was

determined in European countries, so to speak, of what architecture is and how it's taught. But many others are how it's practiced in the whole world, and one of them is the 20,000 forms that exist of making architecture in our context, in Latin America. And I think you must unlearn everything, right? And you must learn to let it exist from those thousands of ways of existing, from those thousands of forms of possibilities of being. And that it's not just that aesthetic act of creating objects in landscapes, but that it must enable processes, and therefore it has to be many things. I think that's fundamental to being able to return the possibility that we can continue existing on this planet. We live in frictions and contradictions; we live in a society full of frictions and contradictions that are arising precisely because they are frictions and contradictions, and it's not what we thought it could be. This society that promised everyone the possibility to grow, to exist, to have, to be, on a basis that's impossible because by itself it needs the impossibility of the other to exist. So, all of that is arising, and we must imagine another form, another way, another society to be able to remain on this planet because if not, we're going to disappear.

Nicolás: *Totally. And that's precisely another thing we were talking about, that of the discourse around Latin America, which always resorts to importing, talks about everything that needs fixing, all the things we have to learn, all the things that are wrong, and how developed the rest of the world is. But we also see it from another point of view, and we should actually understand that flow in the other direction. All the things that Latin America has to teach, to export, all that knowledge, that experience of having worked in such a particular situation that's so relevant to this moment we were talking about just now, and how valuable that can be in other contexts. I don't know if you want to talk a bit about that topic.*

Tatiana: Yes, exactly. For me, it would be incredible if we could, instead of – thinking about what I was telling you about cell phones, that in China, they never had to have cables, and suddenly, they were already in another place, another technology. How can we in Latin America, instead of following that little path they told us was the path to being a developed society, find the possibility of never having gotten there? What's the possibility that in China, there were never cables strung in the street? How can we think about that possibility in our context, when we never arrived at that determination? Or we haven't arrived, but hopefully not, because I don't think it's the right path, which allows us to invent other spaces and have other freedoms? And stop chasing that thing that we already realized everywhere doesn't work, that it's falling apart.

I think Latin America is at a very interesting threshold, it's in a place leaving one reality and opening a new one, which hopefully is a space to enter another place. Just as I really like the inference with my reflection on cell phones, how to enable another reality, leaving the one we have, knowing today that the one we were chasing is collapsing, and isn't that what all of

Kloster Maria Friedenshort
Tatiana Bilbao Estudio, 2017 - ongoing

society imagined? It's difficult, right?

Besides, it's also controversial. I was just thinking about it in a reflection, for example, with housing, in my context. For a century, we've been selling to people that housing is this space made of super formal materials, right? Brick, concrete, steel, etc., and it's this place that has a kitchen, bedrooms, a living room. And it's this dream that everyone – or well, at least I now know that it's not – should aspire to, but how do you tell someone who hasn't been there and who has dreamed for generations of being there not to be there anymore? How are you going to tell someone that, actually, their earth house is the most sustainable, the most precious thing in the world, when your whole life you told them their earth house was poor and they had to change it for a concrete house? It's a very, very selfish issue. So, I don't find it easy or romantic either, what I'm saying about taking advantage of that threshold to generate another possibility. But somehow, we should sustain it and be able to stay in that threshold, maybe, while we can all convince ourselves that we have to look for that threshold to allow us to arrive at another reality, not the one we were imagining when we were crossing it. Besides, I like the idea of threshold because of our cities, our Latin American contexts, that being at a threshold, in a place where you're crossing from one place to another, is a place, it's a moment of great emotion, great expectation, many possibilities. I feel that the condition when you're already in Europe, for example, is something else.

We're always in that illusion of constructing reality, as opposed to there already being a reality that has to be transformed, right?

Nicolás: *Yes, no, without a doubt, well, it's a theme that has all of us here very excited. And with the magazine, we have been looking for people, looking for conversations, looking for voices, even not exclusively architects, but we're also trying to talk with artists, photographers, people from other disciplines. Returning to the theme of plurality and finding yourself in the other that we were talking about just now, which seems like a really beautiful idea to us, and we think should be almost structural within any architect, right? That empathy and that space to let the other be. But anyway, again, thank you so much for making this space for us. We're personally very happy to have been able to meet you, to have been able to talk with you for this time. Good luck with your projects, with the office, and obviously, we'll keep you posted!*

Tatiana: Great, thank you both, Sofia and Nicolas, and whatever you need, let's keep in touch. Thank you so much!

Sea of Cortez Research Center, Tatiana Bilbao Estudio, 2017 - 2023

Order / Disorder
House with Columns

Text written by Iñaki Harosteguy

***Iñaki Harosteguy** is an Associate Professor at the School of Architecture and Urban Studies at Universidad Torcuato di Tella (UTDT) in Buenos Aires. He is also the founder of SUPRA ORDER, an ongoing research project focused on the operative and performative possibilities of order through an open archive of projects and a collaborative bibliographic collection that shares a common, timeless, and universal architectural language and design methodologies. In 2020, Harosteguy co-founded HARGAR studio with Isidro Garcerón; their practice aims to bridge theory and architecture in La Plata and Buenos Aires. His work has also been published in multiple media outlets, exhibited at the International Biennial of Buenos Aires, and received awards in numerous competitions. Harosteguy received his Master's in Advanced Architectural Design from the School of Architecture of Madrid and a degree in Architecture and Urbanism from La Plata National University.*

House With Columns, Interior View
Photos by Javier Agustin Rojas

House With Columns, Interior View
Photos by Javier Agustin Rojas

The threshold that interests us is not the one separating inside from outside, but rather the one that exists between two ways of thinking about architecture: order as an abstract system and disorder as the condition of life. SUPRA ORDER is our research platform exploring generic strategies of strict order; HARGAR is the studio where those strategies are tested in concrete projects for real people. Between them exists a productive, inseparable tension, a threshold that deepens and feeds back on itself.

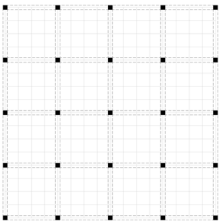
The House with Columns (Villa Elisa, 2022) operates in that intermediate world between theory and practice. The column grid imposes an isotropic, neutral, and repetitive structure – an available framework indifferent to use. Upon this radical order, domestic life unfolds its own logic: furniture, plants, routines, affections. One gives meaning to the other.

This diptych of complementary opposites seeks to make visible that dual nature: architecture as objective support, life as subjective content.

The threshold between them is not a line; it is the project itself.

House With Columns, Exterior View
Photos by Javier Agustin Rojas

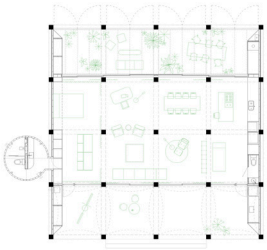
House With Columns, Column View
Photos by Javier Agustin Rojas



House with Columns, Structural Diagram

Opuestos Complementarios

medio	*vida*
arquitectura	*personas*
infraestructura	*naturaleza*
estructura	*usos*
sistema	*aleatoriedad*
soporte	*performance*
marco	*contenido*
espacio	*experiencia*
geométrico	*amorfo*
objetivo	*subjetivo*
lógico	*contingente*
neutral	*impredecible*
universal	*particular*
general	*subjetivo*
atemporal	*dinámico*
trascendente	*pasajero*
eterno	*efímero*
abstracto	*poético*
radical	*singular*
claridad	*confusión*
repetición	*sorpresa*
rítmico	*inestable*
escenario	*improvisación*
flexible	*caótico*
matemático	*espontáneo*
simple	*complejo*
contundente	*difuso*
memorable	*ordinario*
confortable	*divertido*
bello	*atractivo*
cuantificable	*cualificable*
equilibrio	*relación*
acción	*interacción*
racional	*pasional*
control	*descontrol*
organización	*libertad*



House with Columns, Structural Diagram

Complimentary Opposites

medium	*life*
architecture	*people*
nature	*nature*
structure	*uses*
system	*randomness*
support	*performance*
framework	*content*
space	*experience*
geometric	*amorphous*
subjective	*subjective*
contingent	*contingent*
neutral	*unpredictable*
universal	*particular*
general	*subjective*
timeless	*dynamic*
transcendent	*passing*
eternal	*ephemeral*
abstract	*poetic*
radical	*singular*
clarity	*confusion*
repetition	*surprise*
rhythmic	*unstable*
stage	*improvisation*
flexible	*chaotic*
mathematical	*spontaneous*
simple	*complex*
sharp	*diffuse*
memorable	*ordinary*
comfortable	*fun*
beautiful	*attractive*
quantifiable	*qualifiable*
balance	*relationship*
action	*interaction*
rational	*passionate*
control	*chaos*
organization	*freedom*

Thresholds of Resilience:
Architecture, Social Disparity, and Layered Urban Life in La revancha

Text written by Verusca Vasconez

Veruska Vasconez *is a Brazilian architect, urban designer, and academic whose work bridges practice, research, and teaching. She teaches at the University of Miami School of Architecture, where she leads advanced design studios focused on housing, infrastructure, material innovation, and urban resilience. She is the co-founder of Flare Design Studio, established in 2023, and OLAB, founded in 2022, a research and design platform dedicated to architecture, technology, construction, and urbanism. She is also a Partner at AWP-Architects in Paris and is associated with Meetinghouse Miami, an interdisciplinary cultural platform. Her practice and research engage collaborative design processes, international academic exchange, and new construction methodologies.*

Across Latin America, informal settlements represent one of the most complex spatial conditions of contemporary urbanization. Public discourse often describes them in terms of absence: infrastructure, legal security, formal planning, and durable housing. However, this language remains deeply misleading. These territories are not empty spaces waiting for correction, but dense urban worlds shaped by migration, labor, scarcity, memory, improvisation, and collective intelligence. They reveal the deep relationship between architecture and inequality and form one of the central ways the modern city has been generated.

La Revancha, in Manta, Ecuador, must be understood in this context. Its name, which suggests both reclaiming and revenge, carries a social and political charge. Like many peripheral neighborhoods in Latin America, it emerged through economic vulnerability, unequal access to land, and the inability of formal housing markets to provide dignified options for low-income families. The settlement reveals a larger structure of disparity: between the formal and informal city, the center and the periphery, private aspiration and collective neglect.

This text examines La Revancha as a layered urban ecosystem. Streets, lots, courtyards, unfinished walls, and domestic thresholds express a city shaped by residents over time. These elements reveal how families continually negotiate domestic needs, financial constraints, climatic pressures, and institutional neglect, using architecture

Street View,
Image by Rafaela Castilho, 2026

as a tool to transforming the social and environmental conditions that sustain inequality, while recognizing the knowledge already embedded within the community.

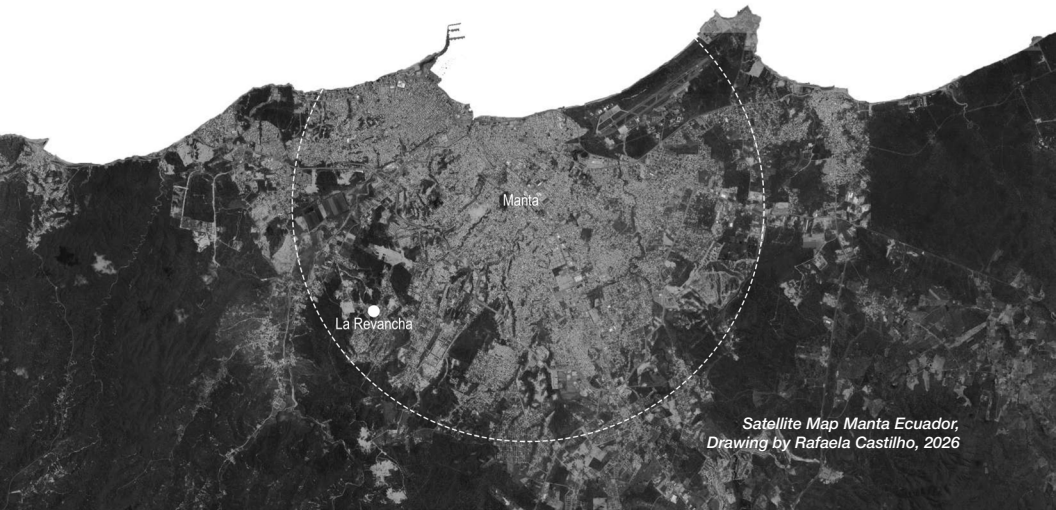
Informality has often been misread as disorder.

However, as Ananya Roy argues, informality is not simply outside planning; it is an idiom of urbanization through which cities are produced.[1] La Revancha confirms this. Its urban form is not random. Residents have produced it through incremental acts of construction, occupation, and exchange. Each element belongs to a longer story of household growth, economic uncertainty, and social negotiation. What appears unfinished often signals temporal intelligence: a house waiting for the next paycheck, a foundation prepared for a future room, a front yard that serves at once as entrance, workplace, garden, and space of encounter.

The case of Tania Elizabeth Anchundia Penarrieta and Joffre Leonardo Laz Lascano makes this complexity concrete. Their house began as a modest dwelling on an 8-by-15-meter parcel, built with brick and concrete block. When the couple acquired an adjacent parcel, expanding the property to 16-by-15 meters. The house became a horizon of future possibility: a place that could grow and reorganize itself.

In La Revancha, housing is not a finished object. It is a process. John F. C. Turner's argument that housing should be understood through the control of inhabitants remains crucial here.[2] Residents' capacity to make decisions, contribute labor, and adapt their environments over time matters more than the finished form. The task is to give that agency more stable and more dignified spatial tools.

The proposal is organized around thresholds as spatial, social, climatic, and political conditions. It marks the place where difference is negotiated: between home and street, privacy and visibility, individual family and collective neighborhood. In vulnerable urban contexts, thresholds often become hardened. Fear produces high walls. Insecurity reduces openings. Houses turn inward. The street loses the eyes and everyday exchanges that Jane Jacobs



Satellite Map Manta Ecuador, Drawing by Rafaela Castilho, 2026

identified as central to urban safety.[3] When this happens, architecture can unintentionally intensify isolation.

For this reason, the project gives special attention to the front edge of the house. The wall between the pedestrian path and the front yard becomes a cobogo wall, a porous, tropical architectural element that mediates rather than separates. The cobogo allows air, light, and shadow to pass through, with partial visibility. It is neither transparent nor solid. It produces a calibrated condition of reciprocity. From the street, pedestrians perceive life and inhabitation without fully entering the private realm. From the house, residents can see movement and the rhythm of the street without feeling exposed. The cobogo wall becomes a climatic, social, and ethical threshold.

This front threshold anchors the project's theory of resilience. Safety cannot rely only on enclosure. When every house becomes a fortress, the neighborhood loses the shared visibility that supports collective life. The cobogo protects without isolating. It allows the front yard to become a ssemi-public space of transition, where planting, informal work, and domestic life can coexist.

The architectural methodology begins with the dwelling as a sequence of layers: the cobogo wall, the front yard, the raised entry, the interior rooms, the central courtyard, and the backyard. Together, these transform the house into a system of thresholds rather than a sealed volume.

The front yard is not a leftover setback but a transitional room between the street and the house. Residents can sit, work, plant, watch children, receive visitors, or conduct small, informal transactions. Domestic space participates in the public realm. This layer softens the entrance and gives depth to the facade, restoring encounters at the edge of the home.

The raised base, or plinth, lifts domestic life above unstable or flood-prone ground and marks the transition from vulnerable terrain to protected dwelling. It reduces loss, protects belongings, and gives the house a sense of permanence, serving as a symbolic and spatial act.

Within the house, rooms should be understood as adaptable chambers rather than fixed, specialized compartments. Households change over time which is why the proposal treats the room as a flexible unit within a larger spatial system. This respects incremental intelligence, where residents constantly adjust their homes to their needs, income, and aspirations.

The construction methodology follows the same principle through a simple, repeatable structural framework that families and local builders can understand and adapt. A modular wall system defines the rooms and allows future additions to connect more coherently. Openings, walls, courtyards, and service areas align through a shared spatial logic. The intention is to create a construction grammar that makes future change safer.

This construction approach matters because incremental growth often creates vulnerabilities when families add rooms without proper structural order. The proposal provides a stable architectural framework. Families build

over time through savings, labor, and changing needs.

At the center of the house, the courtyard becomes the most important interior threshold. It is an open-air room around which domestic life can gather. It brings light, air, and vegetation into the plan and creates a protected space for gathering, caring, and playing. It can absorb water and reduce heat. It is not an empty void but a productive interior garden and a mediator between environmental performance and everyday life. The courtyard also connects the individual house to the block's interior life. If several homes organize gardens toward a shared interior condition, the block can develop a second layer of community life away from street exposure. This interior garden network can become a place where children play, plants grow, and conversations take place in shade.

The backyard forms the final layer of the domestic sequence. It can support service functions, planting, storage, water tanks, or future construction. It also allows the house to remain open-ended. The proposal treats the backyard as a reserve of possibility. It allows the house to remain unfinished in a positive sense: not incomplete, but capable of growth.

Read together, the cobogo wall, front yard, rooms, central courtyard, and backyard form a sequence moving from visibility to privacy, from street life to domestic intimacy, from hard surface to planted ground. Each layer negotiates a different condition of vulnerability and possibility. This sequence also reframes resilience at the block scale. La Revancha cannot be transformed one house at a time if the environmental and social systems around those houses remain fragile. The block must operate as a collective structure of water, soil, shade, social encounter, and incremental growth. Urban design becomes the art of coordinating layers. It does not erase the existing neighborhood but reveals and strengthens its latent order.

This approach reframes the role of architecture in relation to poverty. Architecture alone cannot solve structural inequality, but It can interrupt patterns of exclusion. A poorly built house can lock families into cycles of repair, flood damage, and insecurity. A carefully designed dwelling can reduce recurring losses, support health, allow expansion, and give residents a stronger platform from which to build their lives.

N. John Habraken's distinction between support and infill offers a useful framework.[4] The support is the durable framework: the raised plinth, the structural shell, the roof, the courtyard, and the service zones. The infill is what residents adapt over time: partitions, finishes, planting, extensions, and daily patterns of use. This distinction respects La Revancha's temporal economy. Abdou Maliq Simone's idea of people as infrastructure also clarifies the project's stakes.[5] In many underserved urban contexts, social networks perform the work that formal systems fail to provide. Architecture should not weaken these networks by isolating households behind defensive walls. It should give them spatial support. The cobogo front wall, the semi-public yard, the interior garden, and the block-scale water spaces work toward this goal.

Courtyard Interior View,
Image by Rafaela Castilho

La Revancha also challenges architecture as a discipline.

It asks architects to move beyond the fantasy of complete control and toward practices of listening and support. The architect is not the heroic author of a finished object, but the designer of conditions: conditions for growth, repair, encounter, ventilation, safety, and dignity.

To design within such thresholds is to accept complexity. La Revancha is layered by economic disparity, environmental risk, domestic aspiration, social solidarity, and institutional absence. These layers cannot be resolved through a single architectural gesture. However, architecture can give them form, order, and possibility. It can create spaces where protection does not require isolation, where resilience does not mean hardness alone, and where incremental growth does not mean perpetual vulnerability. Architecture becomes a meaningful tool of transformation: not by erasing informality, but by working through its intelligence; not by imposing a finished image of the city, but by creating thresholds through which a more equitable urban life can emerge.

[1] Ananya Roy, "Urban Informality: Toward an Epistemology of Planning," Journal of the American Planning Association 71, no. 2 (2005): 147-158.
[2] John F. C. Turner, Housing by People: Towards Autonomy in Building Environments (London: Marion Boyars, 1976).
[3] Jane Jacobs, The Death and Life of Great American Cities (New York: Random House, 1961).
[4] N. John Habraken, Supports: An Alternative to Mass Housing (London: Architectural Press, 1972).
[5]Abdou Maliq Simone, For the City Yet to Come: Changing African Life in Four Cities (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

This project is not a speculative academic exercise but a real, ongoing architectural initiative. It is currently under development as a pro bono collaboration and is expected to be completed by the end of 2027. The work is being carried out in partnership with architect Barbara Rangel, the University of Miami, and the Faculdade de Engenharia

Lot Section, Drawing by Rafaela Castilho, 2026

do Porto. As an active project situated within a living community, its design continues to evolve through on-site engagement, collaboration, and incremental construction, reflecting the same temporal and social principles discussed throughout this text.

Remix as Attitude:
20 Years of Wiki Architecture

Text written by Antonio Yemail

Antonio Yemail Cortés *is an architect and industrial designer from the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, with a Master's in Construction from the Universidad Nacional de Colombia. He is currently pursuing a doctorate in Architecture at the Universidad de la República (Uruguay) while developing an artistic practice in parallel.*

In 2007, he founded Yemail Arquitectura, a studio that brings together professionals from various disciplines—from architecture and art to sociology—to enhance spaces of different scales through their ecological, material, technological, and social diversity. His experimental line privileges structural clarity and resource economy, allowing him to tackle projects ranging from the renovation of heritage buildings and the construction of productive rural housing to the development of installations and museums that explore contemporary cultural issues, with an emphasis on historical memory, resource economy, and decarbonization. His work has been recognized with the First Prize at the Colombian Architecture Biennial (2012, 2024), the Ibero-American Design Biennial (2012), and the Quito Architecture Biennial (2016). His work has been published in media such as A+U, Harvard Design Magazine, C3, ArchDaily, and Arquitectura Viva. He has been nominated for the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative (2014), the Mies Crown Hall Americas Prize (2024), and the Ammodo Architecture Award (2025), among others. He is a professor in the Faculty of Architecture at the Universidad de los Andes in Bogotá, where he promotes an understanding of architecture as a means to establish links between various forms of life, both human and more-than-human.

In 2006, the publication of the text "Wiki architecture" proposed an emerging reading of the project based on the logic of editing and the collective construction of knowledge. At that time, the intuition suggested that designing no longer consisted of producing closed forms, but rather in "managing the capacity of spaces to be transformed" [1], accepting intervention and appropriation as constitutive parts of the work. That formulation, though permeated by the optimism of the open systems of that era, operated as the seed of a practice that today—after two decades of exercise in Colombia—is forced to shift toward a much more demanding condition: that of operating in the midst of instability.

Revisiting that idea today from the Global South is not an exercise in nostalgic validation, but a necessary contrast against a territory traversed by historical tensions and irreducible material inequalities. In this context, architecture does not face clean systems available for editing, but rather complex assemblages where the rural and the urban, the formal and the informal, the human and the more-than-human coexist in constant friction. Our practice, therefore, understands the project not as an autonomous object, but as a situated interaction; an assemblage where diverse bodies, knowledges, residues, and temporalities converge.
For us, designing implies working from the fragment: not to complete, but to articulate; not to stabilize, but to mediate. The building, as already suggested in 2006, never ends, but today that statement acquires a different thickness: it is not just about its transformation over time, but its inscription in a field of relations that exceeds it.

This stance has materialized in a series of small and medium-scale commissions—hybrid programs operating in diverse locations that demand an agenda of mestizaje operativo [operational mestizaje]. We do not seek formal purity or the administrative control that characterizes "Major Architecture" [2]; on the contrary, we place ourselves in a state of manifest weakness. From this perspective, we build devices that operate in the "between": between scales that do not correspond,

Reader's Note

In this sense, this text proposes a critical reading of "Wiki architecture" based on projects developed by the firm. Rather than illustrating a prior theory, these works allow us to observe how that intuition is transformed when facing concrete conditions. The argument is organized around a series of recurring notions—mestizaje as a remixing attitude, links as a field of mediation, ecosystems as a condition of the soil, memory as a construction in dispute, and matter as a system in transformation—which are presented not as closed categories, but as reading tools. Between each of these parts, the projects appear as fragments of instances where these ideas are rehearsed, tensioned, and reconfigured. The structure of the text responds to the logic it proposes: an open system, composed of layers, where thought and practice edit each other.

between times that are not linear, between systems that enter into friction. Rather than resolving these tensions, the project makes them visible and operable. This condition—close to what other traditions have thought of as coexistence, plurality, or border thinking—allows us to reread the "wiki" intuition not as a digital metaphor, but as a material strategy: a way of building based on remixing, distributed authorship, and continuous transformation.

Mestizaje: Remix as Attitude

The publication of The Form of Information in Architecture arose at a moment of fascination with interactivity and the dissolution of physical limits through digital flows. In that context, we defined "Wiki architecture" not as a typology, but as an attitude : we maintained that "the design of spaces today is, to a large extent, the administration of their own capacity to be edited" [1]. That intuition suggested a radical inversion of authorship: the architect ceased to be the omniscient planner to become a manager of open supports. We affirmed, with a mix of naivety and defiance, that "the building never ends with its inauguration" [1]. Reread today, that formulation finds is material condition in mestizaje. Not as a cultural metaphor or synthesis, but as an operational logic that allows the idea of continuous editing to be transferred to the field of the built. In a territory like the Colombian one, where ecological, social, and productive layers coexist without stabilizing, projecting implies working from the remix: assembling without purifying, articulating without closing, and allowing the project to remain open to transformations that cannot be completely anticipated.

In this sense, architecture stops organizing homogeneous systems to operate as a field of heterogeneous relations. The "wiki" condition thus shifts from the digital plane to a situated practice: an architecture that does not impose itself on the context, but allows itself to be affected by it. Authorship does not disappear, but is redistributed among actors, uses, materials, and temporalities. The project becomes a support where multiple agencies intervene, many of them non-human, participating in its configuration and transformation.

*All images are provided by the author.

Proyecto Binario — Bogotá, 2020

Binario does not seek to integrate into the neighborhood, but to tension it from within. It takes recognizable elements—the front garden, the brick—and pushes them to a point of exaggeration where they cease to be simply context and become project matter. Architecture does not reproduce the street; it intensifies it: double heights erupt into a domestic scale, the staircase is oversized until it becomes a space in itself, and the access is dilated into a sequence that shifts the boundary between the public and the private. Instead of continuity, a controlled friction appears where the building operates on the edge of the neighborhood scale.

In this way, mestizaje is not conciliation, but superposition. Rather than resolving, the project accumulates layers: neighborhood and modernity, material culture and technical structure, but also uses that do not stabilize into a single program. Living room, workshop, meeting space, and cultural management coexist in the same volume, allowing the building to function as an open support for diverse practices. The mixture occurs not only in the materials but in the way the space is occupied and redefined, maintaining that ambiguous condition where nothing is ever fully fixed.

This logic of coexistence finds affinity with forms of living where distinct elements do not fuse or annul each other, but rather remain in productive tension. From this perspective, mestizaje operativo [operational mestizaje] does not seek to resolve contradiction, but to make it operational.

Far from the search for purity or control, a mestizo architecture assumes instability as a condition. In fragmented contexts, open systems—capable of incorporating material, cultural, and programmatic diversity—present a greater capacity for adaptation.

Atelier Tropical — Bogotá, 2020

The project re-inhabits an existing house through an operation of insertion and repair: it is not replaced, but assembled. Based on a format of different programs, commerce, cultural space, and residential units are superimposed, articulated by an interior courtyard that organizes the complex across three levels. From the sidewalk and the front garden, a gradient of intimacy is proposed that shifts the public toward the domestic without a clear separation, allowing the spaces to be activated, connected, or transformed into continuous circuits. More than a typology, the building operates as a form of management in the midst of the family: an administration of time, use, and links that is progressively consolidated.

The house preserves its proportion and its street front, but it is densified by layers that are incorporated gradually, in a single gesture of assembly between the existing and the new. The courtyard ceases to be a void and becomes a living thicket that regulates light, humidity, and use, while vaults, terraces, and openwork (calados) operate as open mechanisms that allow for continued construction. Architecture is not fixed; it is managed: it adapts, corrects itself, and accumulates memory. The construction process has developed over five years, through partial advances that respond to available resources, shared decisions, and continuous adjustments.

The Challenge of Scale: Against the Anxiety of "Bigness"

Our practice has been built in the midst of tensions between times, bodies, and memories that do not align on a single scale. Facing this, architecture does not assert itself as a resolution, but rather as a position of rebellion that operates from a state of manifest weakness. This stance distances itself from "Major Architecture," understood as an abstract machinery oriented toward managing "great problems" through large-scale operations, where dimension becomes an instrument of power and homogenization [3].
In the face of that modern anxiety over scale—visible in the logic of Bigness, where architecture becomes autonomous from its context and grows indifferent to it (Koolhaas, 1995)—our practice rehearses a shift toward the minor. This is not a matter of dimensional reduction, but a disciplinary strategy: attending to that network of objects, devices, and forms of thought that are "too diffuse, too weak, too insignificant" for the logics of capital. Within this framework, "the minor" does not imply doing less, but rather operating in a different way: less instrumental, more relational, and more involved in the specific conditions of the context.

Community Gardens for Seniors — Bogotá, 2025

The project does not introduce a system, but rather inserts itself into an existing one: two community gardens sustained by older adults that already operated as a space for meeting, production, and care. The intervention acts from the minimum, adjusting concrete conditions: leveling the ground, reducing slopes, widening paths, incorporating supports, and elevating work surfaces. These are precise operations that do not change the form of the place, but transform it, making it more accessible and habitable for with specific needs.

The intervention recognizes that inclusion is also a form of infrastructure. In this framework, scale is defined by the fragility of bodies: heights, supports, slopes, and usage times adjusted to those who inhabit the space. At the same time, the materials come from a previous use—timber and roofing dismantled from other structures of a previously built pavilion—and are reincorporated, inverting the cycle of what was originally understood as disposable.

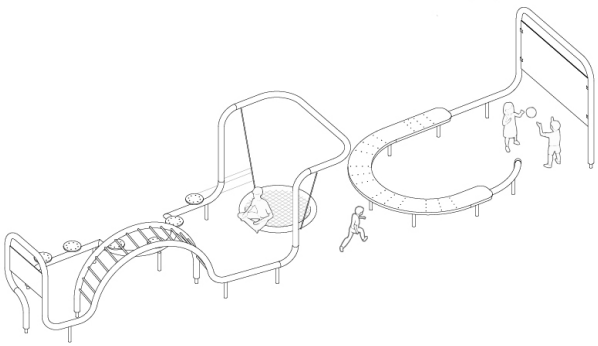
Working in the minor also implies decomposing problems and approaching them from a closer gaze. Scale is constructed from bodies—from their ways of inhabiting, perceiving, and relating—and not from a universal measure. This condition assumes a more humble, but not arbitrary, attitude: a form of precision. Therefore, faced with the abstraction of the large scale, the minor allows for operation in contact with the real, recognizing the diversity of situations that constitute the project.

Seen this way, the remix articulates not only materials or knowledges, but also scales: it connects the domestic with the territorial, the ephemeral with the permanent, without adhering to stable hierarchies. Rather than opposing the large scale, this practice overflows it from its interstices: where the monumental abstracts, the minor concretizes; where it stabilizes, the minor transforms.

Aula Abierta [Open Classroom] — Girardot, 2024

The intervention is organized as a linear device that rests upon the existing footprint of a rural school garden, with the aim of extending it. It does not construct an enclosure, but rather a sequence of acts: shade, play, and gathering. The structure functions as an active line that orders the space without closing it, allowing for multipurpose uses that adjust to what occurs on site. More than an object, it is a support that amplifies a condition already present in the location.

In this context, scale is defined by the bodies of children in motion. Play activates the structure and turns it into an open learning space. The shade regulates the time of use, while the linear arrangement allows for traversing, pausing, or appropriating the space in different ways.



Time as a Changing Material

A third line of work has been to assume time as a project material. Temporality in our work flees from linearity to unfold as a texture of overlapping times: processes that do not advance continuously, but rather are interrupted, transformed, and reappear. We are interested in architectures that change state: things that disappear but can be reborn in other forms; structures that adhere, are reprogrammed, or are rewritten without the need to start anew. Thus, architecture is situated at an intermediate point, without the urge for permanence that characterizes the disciplinary tradition.

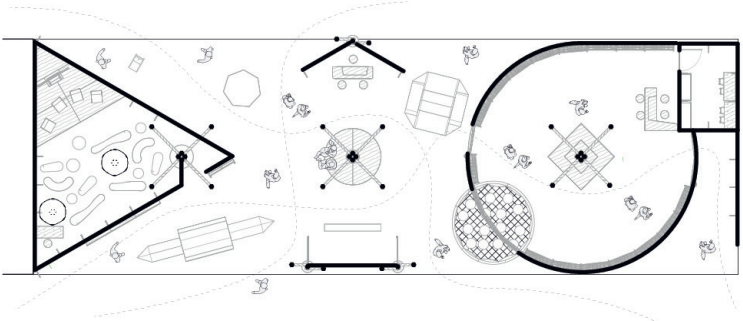
As we stated in 2006, “contemporary space is an event, not a container” [1]. This is the intuition that the project does not conclude with its construction, but rather opens itself to a continuous regime of transformation where use, wear, and adaptation are part of the design. But it is also the conviction that architecture can be understood as a practice that does not fix forms, but instead continuously interrogates reality and enables multiple possibilities for change [4].

Casa-taller el 22 [House-Workshop 22] — El Socorro, 2024

Everything begins with a post-pandemic conversation about how to inhabit the thick of rurality in a place like El Socorro, in the Santander region of northern Colombia. Built upon the ruins of a traditional dwelling, the intervention proposes a progressive logic that finds its rhythm by entering into a dialogue with the memory of construction techniques and traditional ways of inhabiting the locale. It was a matter of following an intuition: rather than replacing, the project rehearses ways of recycling the existing house, recognizing that there is no point in inhabiting that landscape without working with what was already there.

The house embraces making and living as a continuum, incorporating uses such as the “salón amable” [kind hall] in the central courtyard, a format where intergenerational forms of encounter between neighbors are activated. In this shift, the dwelling behaves as a social device that blurs the boundaries between house, workspace, and meeting place,

Just as dwellings appear, transform, disappear, and re-emerge under new conditions, cultural pavilions operate as temporal thresholds in the inverse sense: no longer as provisional objects, but as devices capable of activating new cycles beyond their initial purpose. This means that between the ephemeral and the permanent there is no opposition, but rather a field of work. It suggests that architecture can stop following



the canon of eternity to commit itself to transformation: not as loss, but as continuity within change [3]

Matter: Unconventional Assemblages and Disobediences

This axis approaches architecture through materiality as an operative field of transformation. It proposes that Wiki architecture is, above all, a form of repair, in that it does not involve producing from scratch but rather intervening in existing cycles, assemblages, and material economies: operating on reality with what is available and with that which is already charged with history. We constantly ask ourselves how matter might cease to be a passive medium and instead become an active system of remixing, where techniques, waste, and knowledge combine without fixed hierarchies. We feel that when we move closer to that answer, the project shifts from invention to reconfiguration: it does not optimize a given system; it edits it.

From this perspective, projecting implies a form of technological disobedience. It is not about maximizing the efficiency of industrial systems, but about diverting them: incorporating the ordinary, the discarded, and the underutilized as project matter.

Designing from the standpoint of reversibility and second life questions the linearity of production—extract, produce, discard—and opens architecture to more complex cycles of transformation. Matter is not resolved: it is put back into circulation.

Los Cerrajones Cultural Park — Barquisimeto, Venezuela 2016 – 2018

The project is built from available components, following a logic close to assembly and hacking. Industrial parts, containers, automotive industry components, and metallic structures converge as active parts of a system that does not seek to hide its origin, but rather to operate it. The intervention does not impose a form, but instead organizes a field where these elements are recombined to produce platforms, roofs, slopes, and pathways. Within a fragmented and vulnerable territory at the heart of the Los Cerrajones community, architecture appears as a practice of continuous adjustment that resolves issues using discontinued components, dismantling them and putting them back into circulation.

In this context, the space functions as an open laboratory where construction, use, and learning occur simultaneously. The devices—play areas, grandstands, workshops, radio stations—are not separate but integrated into an infrastructure that is collectively activated. Children occupy a central place in this dynamic: not as end-users, but as an active part of a material pedagogy where doing, testing, and transforming build meaning. The architecture accelerates processes in a vulnerable community, not from the standpoint of a “solution,” but from the activation of capacities: a technological disobedience that converts matter into a medium for learning, production, and encounter.

In Colombia, this position becomes visible by reading materials such as brick, not only as a constructive solution but as cultural, technical, and political devices. Historically associated with the vernacular and an emblem of modernity, it is currently configured as a material capable of articulating local knowledge and structural experimentation. However, in our practice, beyond these properties, it interests us because its resistance is not exhausted in a single use; instead, it admits many forms of reuse—as a reference, in Proyecto Binario [Binary Project] and Atelier Tropical, a large portion of the bricks used came from demolition. Seen in this way, the logic of the mix acts as a form of repair in a symbolic and ecosystemic act, measured piece by piece.

Greenhouse House, La Calera 2024

The project starts from an intermediate state where construction and demolition are blurred. Built upon the remains of a former rural school, the intervention does not seek to replace, but rather to work from what is already there: reading the pre-existence as a material and temporal inventory available for operation. The action occurs through addition and adjustment, leaning on the existing structure without erasing its traces.

In this context, the structure—clad in clay block—is understood as an ongoing process. The insertion of a metallic greenhouse—lightweight, almost “plug-and-play”—is positioned to activate conditions rather than to define a form. It functions as a mediator between climate, structure, and growth, introducing a distinct regime of use and time. The project is organized as a sequence of cumulative decisions, where each intervention enables the next.

Links: Affects, Agency, and Translations

This axis understands that Wiki architecture can be a mediation device capable of restoring links in fragmented social and ecological contexts. It starts by recognizing interdependence as a condition of inhabiting, but shifts the emphasis toward a broader dimension: that of affects and the relationships between living systems. Architecture does not operate upon an inert world, but rather upon a field where bodies, soils, and matters are active, transforming themselves and participating in the configuration of space.

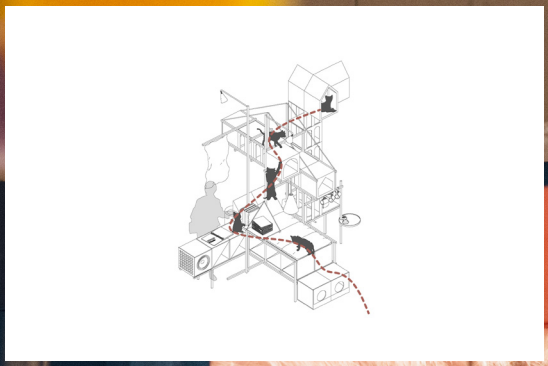
Under this perspective, in our practice, we have explored affective architectures as means of translation.

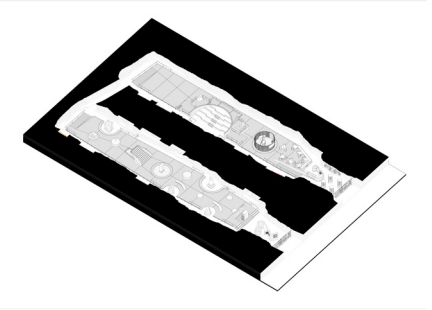
To translate is not to represent, but to make visible and operative the voice of that which does not always have one: latent relationships, memories inscribed in the soil, or ecological dynamics that lie beyond the human. We have a great interest in projects that operate as interfaces where different systems can meet without being reduced to a single logic.

Fábrica de Afectos [Factory of Affects] — Medellín, 2024

The project is constructed as a long-term investigation into domesticity, understood not as a closed space but as a field of relations between species. What began as a specific question—how a domestic object can transform the daily relationship between humans and cats—evolved into an exploration of shared ways of inhabiting, where architecture does not organize hierarchies but instead enables coexistences. The figure of the “cat,” charged with everyday and affective meanings, introduces a threshold between popular material culture and modern architectural thought, shifting the question from the object toward the relationship. Through case studies, spatial catalogs, and installation essays, the project takes housing into a territory where design deals with behaviors, appropriations, and non-stabilized forms of coexistence.

The installation functions as an experimental space where forms of interspecies coexistence are tested. Rather than representing a solution, it builds conditions to observe, activate, and translate interactions: play, distance, curiosity, or rejection become design variables. In this transition between the installative and the device, architecture does not fix uses but rather opens possibilities. This playful character is not incidental but a form of approach: the project remains on a threshold where the domestic and the cultural are in tension, without being fully resolved, leaving open the question of with whom and under what conditions it is possible to inhabit.



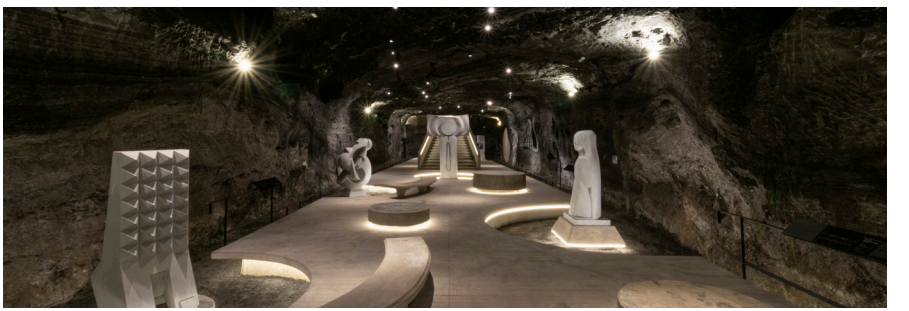


A second line of reasoning has been to consider that life and thought are inseparable: life thinks, and that which is alive—soils, water, air, etc.—communicates and projects languages that exceed what we can normally understand. This compels us to recognize architecture within an ecology of relations where unexpected kinkships emerge between species, materials, and territories [2]. The soil, understood as a living organism and not as a cadastral surface, imposes rhythms of growth and transformation. Working in contexts such as extractive landscapes or exploited territories implies recognizing that the project does not introduce relations, but rather inserts itself into existing dynamics that must be read, translated, and, in many cases, repaired. In this context, we assume that architecture can be a minimal device of coexistence with the agency to activate the political dimension of the territory and of the existing relationships between nature and society [7].

Monumental Underground Museum, Salt Cathedral of Zipaquirá, 2024

At 180 meters underground, the project is situated within a disused extractive infrastructure, where architecture neither corrects nor conceals its condition, but rather reprograms it. The salt mine ceases to operate as a production complex to become a space for public use, where the memory of labor, geology, and contemporary intervention coexist. Designing here implies working with the excavated: not adding matter, but activating a negative volume charged with history.

This operation shifts the meaning of the place from extraction toward repair. The museum introduces new ways of inhabiting a territory previously oriented toward exploitation, building an experience where the body confronts the scale and density of the subsoil. Architecture does not neutralize these conditions; it seeks to give them a performative and legible quality: weight, humidity, darkness, and silence structure the journey. In this context, reprogramming is not simply a change of use, but an alteration of the site's logic, opening a different relationship between matter, time, and experience.



Seen in retrospect, “Wiki Architecture” implies transferring that initial intuition—of space as something editable—to the contemporary material and cultural field. In a context crisscrossed by ecological, social, and productive crises, architecture is exercised in permanent negotiation, situated on thresholds where scales, times, and forms of life intersect.

In this sense, imagination acquires a central role: not as evasion, but as a design tool capable of constructing narratives, rehearsing possible worlds, and articulating diverse realities without reducing them to a single logic.

This position also demands a critical revision of the traditional values of the discipline. If life is ephemeral, there is no reason to think of architecture as eternal. Questioning firmitas implies revising the notions of efficacy and progress that have sustained modern architectural production. Building may be necessary—one of the multiple transformations of matter—but it cannot be justified at the cost of the systematic destruction of the environment in the name of “development.”

Assuming the project as continuous editing implies, then, designing not to fix, but to enable: opening architecture to processes of transformation, to second lives, and to unforeseen uses. Rather than stabilizing the world, it is about participating in its continuous rewriting.

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Umbral

Text written by Cazú Zegers

***Cazú Zegers** is a prominent Chilean architect whose work is defined by a deep "geopoetic" relationship between architecture and the territory. As the founder of her namesake studio and the Fundación para el Patrimonio +1000, she focuses on marking the landscape through architectural gestures that highlight heritage and cultural identity. Her philosophy often integrates "low-tech" methodologies and sustainable materials, such as CLT, to create spaces that facilitate a ritual connection between the inhabitant and the natural environment. A creator of the Andes Workshop platform, Zegers continues to develop projects that challenge extractivist paradigms, proposing a new way of inhabiting the earth through sensitivity and minimal intervention.*

Umbral Mirador Patachoique, Zegers, 2017

Threshold (Umbral) derives from the word lumbral, which in turn comes from the Latin liminaris, meaning liminal or that which is at the beginning. The threshold, then, is the entrance, the principle, the commencement: the first step of any process or transformation. To cross a threshold involves leaving the known behind and opening oneself to new possibilities and futures. It is a temporal activator that connects us with other dimensions. To stand before it and within it is a ritual experience that links us with our essential being, its silence, and connects the mountains and nature.

For years, Cazú Zegers has reflected on these "territorial signs" as geopoetic activators. An example of this is the Plazas Umbrales (Threshold Plazas), conceived to open the territory to new narratives. This is a method that the Chilean architect describes as marking the territory (signar el territorio) to create original cultural forms that invite reflection on alternative models of development. The concept of "Threshold Plazas" as spaces for opening new narratives has enormous potential not only to reconfigure our physical environment but also to restructure how we relate to what lies at the limit between the known and the unknown, the rational and the intuitive. The threshold, as a symbol of transformation and a passage toward the new, resonates deeply in this context.

Zegers proposes the idea of creating Thresholds as circuits within the city of Santiago, but also as territorial "acupunctures" that unite as a great backbone through the entire Andes mountain range. The architect proposes creating a "gesture" that materializes in concrete form, currently concentrated in a system of Threshold Plazas for the Chilean capital. These will allow Santiago to be spoken of as a mountain city, while connecting with the social opportunities and benefits that this uniqueness brings. Furthermore, thresholds are a way of returning a concrete function to the poetic—of making the invisible visible and granting "being" to what would otherwise remain outside the dominant cultural space. According to Chilean curator and designer Patricio Pozzo:

"In Plato's critique, poetry forbids discursive thought: dianoia, the thought that traverses. The poem inhabits the threshold; it is not 'a crossing subject to rules, but rather an offering, a proposition without law.' What happened to poetic language in the digital century? What is happening to the social body? Space as language. The limits of a language and the limits of the world. Poetry as excess".

The purpose of creating this system of Threshold Plazas around the Mapocho Valley is to enhance the heritage and cultural attributes of the territory and landscape, while simultaneously creating a cultural and geopoetic route where the inhabitants of Santiago can enjoy the beauty and benefits of the journey.

In 2023, in the city of Santiago, Cazú Zegers presented a conceptual exhibition at Galería Gallo, where she titled her sculptural object "Threshold". In this context, Pozzo's curatorial text notes:

"The UMBRAL exhibition is recognized as a continuity of the territorial signs

that Zegers has been materializing since 2017, such as the Umbral Mirador de los Volcanes [Volcano Viewpoint Threshold] in Patachoique, Lonquimay, or the Umbral de Plazoleta Negra [Black Plaza Threshold], located at curve 22 of the Road to Farellones in Santiago".

These projects were imagined under the Andes Workshop, a multidisciplinary, collaborative, and educational platform (co-created by Zegers with Grupo Talca) that drives workshops for teachers and students from all over the world. In these workshops, they work alongside communities and incorporate their ways of doing things, using "what is at hand" or the low-tech methodology of the chosen locations. The goal is to leave behind an "object-sign" that opens the territory to new uses and highlights the landscape. Both projects were promoted by the Fundación para el Patrimonio +1000 (Foundation for Heritage +1000), created and led by Zegers. The UMBRAL exhibition and performance was the first gesture toward the future construction of the Espacio AMA (Agora of the Ancestral Woman), the first building planned for the future 21st Century Women's Museum, located on the northern slope of the Santiago Metropolitan Park.

This essay also seeks to reflect Zegers' vision through two Thresholds in particular. One of them is the Umbral Mirador de los Volcanes [Volcano Viewpoint Threshold] in Patachoique, Araucanía, and the second is the Umbral Vivienda Digna [Dignified Housing Threshold] in the Maipú district of Santiago.

In 2017, the Umbral Mirador de los Volcanes was created by six students, collaborators from the local Pehuenche indigenous community, and a carpenter named Pedro Vásquez. The Threshold was located in the Andean region of

Umbral Mirador Patachoique, Zegers, 2017

Northern Araucanía to form part of the “Pehuenche Route,” a project led by Zegers’ Foundation. This route is a sporting and cultural path conceived around five volcanoes: Tolhuaca, Lonquimay, Sierra Nevada, Llaima, and Nevados de Sollipulli. The created Threshold serves as a gateway to the landscape where visitors can recognize the strong Pehuenche connection to the land. Today, this Threshold Plaza is recognized by Ladera Sur as one of the five must-visit thresholds in Chile and has become a “postcard photo” for tourists passing through the area. The sign seeks healing through that connection and openness to the sporting cultural experience.

n 2023, representatives of the “Frente Popular Vivienda Digna” [Dignified Housing Popular Front] neighbors in Maipú approached Cazú Zegers Arquitectura, seeking the architect’s help in managing and creating a social housing project for their community. What has turned into years of work and relationship culminated in the laying of the project’s first stone with the Umbral Vivienda Digna [Dignified Housing Threshold] in 2025. It was designed as a meeting place composed of the two stars of Chile: the Mapuche star (representing Venus) and the national 5-pointed star. Both were traced over one another to speak of the integration of the cultures that inhabit the territory of Chile.

At the center of the stars, a fire pit was added. From each point of the two stars, astronomical lines were projected connecting to the surrounding hills, whith a “guardian” placed on each, symbolizing a particular attribute, such as the guardian of water, light, shadow, seeds, or air. These are sculptures developed by Andes Workshop students in a materials workshop directed by Chilean sculptor Vicente Gajardo, with construction led by sculptor Jessica Torres.

Umbral Mirador Patachoique, Zegers, 2017

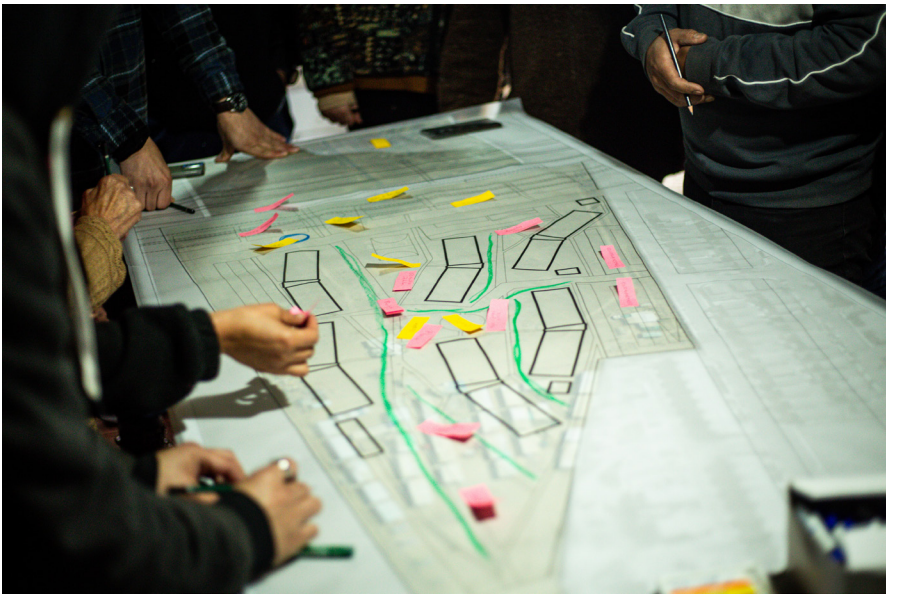
Umbral Vivienda Digna,
Zegers, 2017

Umbral Vivienda Digna,
Zegers, 2017

The Workshop consists of two stages: design and execution, where the neighbors themselves were invited to participate. This way of involving the community in its creation provides a sense of belonging, fostering community care that transcends from generation to generation. The Threshold also stands as the founding stone of an ambitious project, being the first of its kind: social housing built in CLT. This threshold seeks to be the physical and spiritual center of a social project designed and built entirely in wood. Zegers defends, much like architect Alex de Rijke, that wood is the 'new concrete" and must be the material of the 21st century—not only for its environmental credentials but for its numerous benefits to human quality and, therefore, to dignified living.

Thus, the Umbral Vivienda Digna [Dignified Housing Threshold] understands nature as a living being that must be respected and cared for. This is why Chilean naturalist Sergio Elórtegui, in his Andes Workshop, proposed the need to urbanize using endemic species. The Vivienda Digna [Dignified Housing] community became so enthusiastic about this vision that they soon planted a sclerophyllous forest on the site. The project is located in the coastal mountain range of the Central Valley, opening a reflection on how to inhabit this hinterland and on the expansion of Latin American cities.

Subsequently, the other dimension opened by this threshold is the project carried out by the Fundación por el Patrimonio +1000: "The Secret of the Andes". In this project, Zegers suggests that every major river flowing from the mountains to the sea generates cultural "pockets" with specific customs, technologies, and ways of doing, creating great cultural and identity-based richness. The thresholds are part of that narrative.



Umbral Vivienda Digna, Zegers, 2017

The great potential of the Threshold Plaza is that it stands as a territorial sign that inaugurates the space, opening new narratives to the landscape. Thresholds bring to the fore or make visible other elements of the territory, generating spaces for connection and contemplation between the visitor and the surrounding landscape—formed through minimal architectural operations. As mentioned, Zegers' fundamental vision is to project a circuit of Threshold Plazas that can mark the territory (signar el territorio) in Latin America. The goal is to generate these healing spaces for a world attempting to move away from extractivist ways of doing.

The challenge for architects today is to reflect on these matters, confronting and accommodating this new paradigm emerging on earth with the birth of a new culture. The Threshold addresses how the person and matter operate in three-dimensional space. Zegers strongly believes that only from this consciousness can we open new futures, with new possibilities, and rebalance the world. Perhaps then we will not be the next species to disappear from the planet.

In this scenario, Thresholds cease to be just spatial devices and become a cultural necessity. They are the minimum gesture capable of inaugurating a new way of inhabiting, where the territory is not conquered but listened to ; where architecture does not impose, but reveals. Facing a world that has operated from fragmentation and extractivism, Thresholds propose a pause, a conscious act of entry, an opportunity to rebalance our relationship with the earth. They are, in essence, an invitation to cross from an exhausted paradigm toward another still under construction: a new world.

Umbral Vivienda Digna, Zegers, 2017

The Shore is Not a Line

Words by Pablo Useche

***Pablo Useche** is an architect and urban planner from Bogotá whose work moves across design, research, policy, and visual culture. He holds a Bachelor of Architecture and a graduate degree in Land Use Management from Universidad de Los Andes, as well as a Master of Science in Urban Planning from Columbia University GSAPP. Grounded in Latin American contexts, he develops community-led, data-informed projects that imagine more just and inclusive urban futures. His practice bridges local knowledge with global conversations, weaving storytelling and spatial strategy to challenge dominant planning models. From public policy to art direction, he approaches the city as a collaborative and contested space, one where design can reflect lived realities and shape transformative possibilities.*

**All illustrations are provided by the author from his work, "The Shore is Not a Line"*

A line is the simplest mark we have.

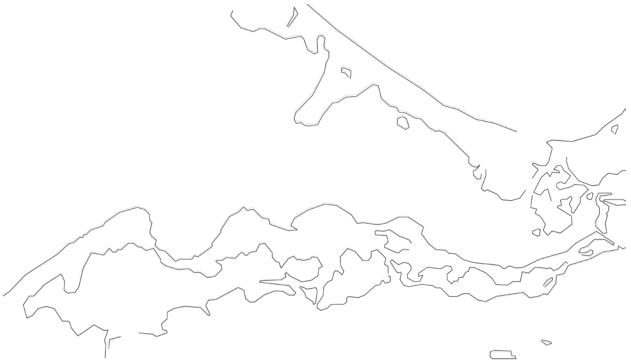
It is also one of the most powerful.

When you draw a line on a map, you decide where one thing ends and another begins. Here ends the sea, here begins the land. Here is what is yours, here is what is mine.

A line is quick. It is easy to read. It can be copied, measured, sold, and registered. A line is what a map needs in order to become a property.

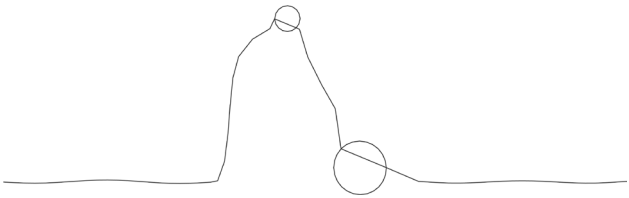
But a line also forgets.

To draw a coast as a line is to forget that the sea moves. That the land changes. That between them there is another place, not fully water and not fully land, with its own tides, its own people, and its own ways of existing.



This is La Boquilla, Colombia.

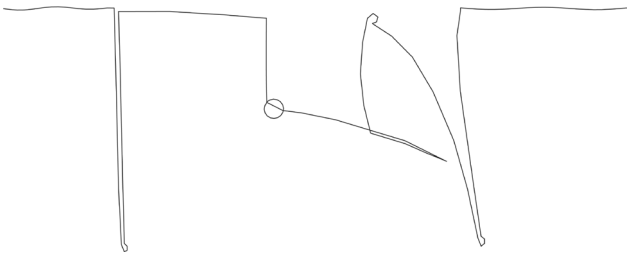
In the seventeenth century, men and women who had been brought from West Africa as slaves, escaped from Cartagena and entered the marsh. They were called Cimarrones. The marsh was not yet a clear space on any map. It was an in-between territory that Spanish surveyors did not fully understand.



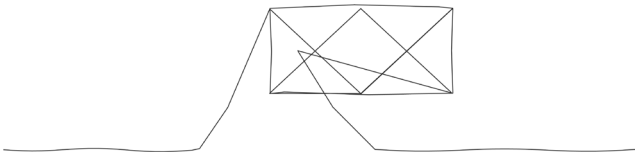
The Cimarrones learned how the marsh could feed them. They learned its hours and water.

When the tide goes down, the marsh reveals its flats. People walk into the mud carrying chocoreos, round wooden nets. They would use them to search for chipi chipi, shrimp, and small shellfish.

They are not on land. They are not in the water. They are inside the line.

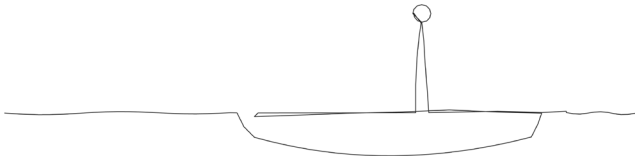


In the mangrove roots, divers collect oysters, mussels, snails, and the red crab known as la pastelera. The roots are an architecture. Each root is a column where life grows. The mangrove is what the line looks like when it is allowed to be three-dimensional.

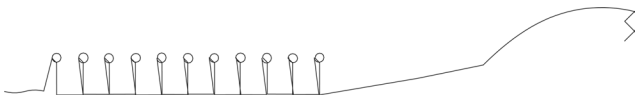


At the natural gates where saltwater and freshwater meet Nasas are placed. Baited cages that allow them to catch fish and small crustaceans. As the water rises, boats leave for the open sea. They fish through the night and return in the morning with sierra, jurel, cojinua and robalo.

Before sunrise, twenty-two men stand on the beach in two rows and pull a single net, two hundred meters long, out of the sea by hand. They call it the chinchorro playero. It is not industrial fishing. It is choreography.



The pallao is a net that waits. It is placed in the marsh and left there for the tide to work. For days, the water moves through it, gathering fish while the fisherman is away.

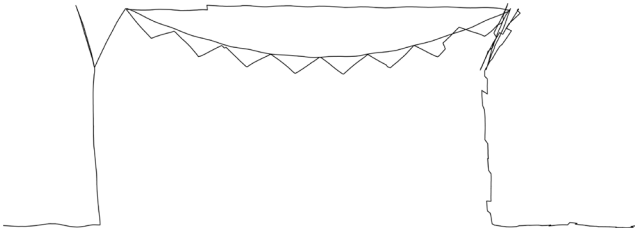


The line has a rhythm.

Between seasons, the community moves with the water. When the sea becomes rough, fishing turns inward toward the marsh. When the sea calms, boats return to open water.

However, then come the lines that refuse to move.

The road that cuts the marsh. The hotels that fence the beach. The mechanic gates that reduce the natural exchange between the sea and the swamp. Morros, a hotelier development, turns mangrove into property and the marsh into a view.



These lines seem reasonable on its own. A road as service. A hotel as investment. A gate as environmental management. A tower as progress.

But together, they reveal the same logic.

They turn movement into control. They turn a threshold into a boundary. They turn a community that lives with the tides into a population fixed to land. It does not record what the line had to erase in order to become a line.

A shore is not a line.

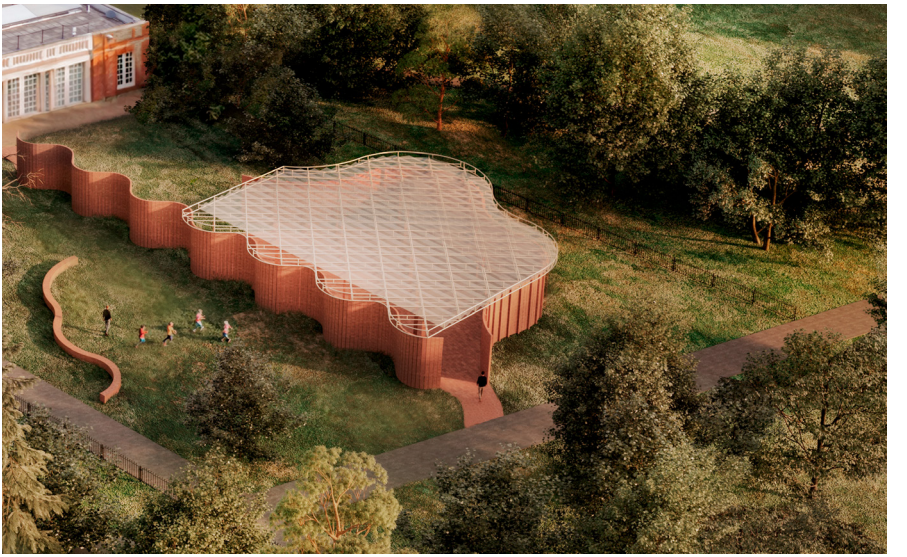
A shore is a verb of negotiation between sea and land. The boquilleros have known this for four hundred years.

The map is only beginning to learn.

Interview:
On Thresholds, Movement and Spaces of Transition

Alessandro Arienzo from LANZA Atelier in conversation with Susana Chinchilla, Manuela Hurtando & Miguel Ángel Santivañez

***LANZA Atelier** was founded in 2015 by Isabel Abascal and Alessandro Arienzo in Mexico City. The leitmotiv of their practice is to find and contribute to the beauty of the world. The office's work has been exhibited at the Latin American Architecture Biennial 2023, the 12th São Paulo Architecture Biennial, the Lisbon Triennial 2019 and Concéntrico Festival in Spain 2021. The studio has presented their work at Syracuse University 2025 - where they were Visiting Professors, CU Denver 2024, ETSA Madrid 2023, Cal Poly Pomona as part of the VDL House Residency Program 2022, Constructing Practice Symposium at Columbia University 2019, among others. The studio has been nominated for the 2016 Ibero American Architecture Biennial Award and the Mies Crown Hall Award for Emerging Architects, IIT Chicago, 2016 and 2022, and for the Brick Award 2021, among others. LANZA atelier has been selected to design the 2026 Serpentine Pavilion.*



Serpentine Pavillion, LANZA Atelier, 2026

Patio: *Patio: To start, what was the inspiration behind the atelier and how have you seen your practice evolve over these years?*

Alessandro: Lanza is made up of Isabel and myself. The studio began in 2015. Isabel lives in Brazil and, at first, we collaborated on small projects until we got the opportunity to do the bathrooms in Ecatepec made of concrete block, a typology that repeats along seven kilometers of bike path. We needed to form a company and we created Lanza Atelier, though honestly we didn't really know what we were doing. There wasn't an ideal or a very direct vision. We simply drew together. Ten years have passed since then. The projects that followed had a lot to do with museum exhibitions. We did Pasajeros at Jumex, which was beautiful, and Gerzso Gerzso Gerzso at the Centro Cultural Universitario Tlatelolco. We also started doing small interventions in houses and renovations. From the beginning, the studio also made furniture, so we always had that scale between museography and furniture. At the start, our practice was very intuitive. Very early in Lanza's history, we did tattoos to pay for the office. We tattooed a guy and it turned out his brother wanted a house, so we did Casa Jajalpa, our first house. For that project, we had several restrictions: the house had to have a wall facing the street, there always had to be a volume. It was the first project in which we twisted the site's restrictions to turn them into the house's concept.

What we try to do most is make the projects feel like a clear idea. We try not to have too many details, but the important thing is that we always approach the project as if it were the first.

Those ideas are behind all the projects. We really think we have no experience. And, as you can see, we have all the models. Most projects have a model. We keep them very present because they're at a scale of one to fifty, so we can play to understand what size we're proposing. For example, you can be making a very small house and realize it's the same size as the annex of Casa Jajalpa. It helps you connect the scale and also the ideas, because many projects we don't manage to build, but the models are there. The idea endures and the project could be said to be alive. It's a way to maintain and feed the ideas.

Patio: *You started connecting the ideas through the projects with thresholds. How have you defined the idea of the threshold in different projects? Do you see it more as something that changes in each project or do you have a more universal theory as part of Lanza's practice?*

Alessandro: The concept of the threshold is very beautiful because it prepares you for a space. Sometimes the concept is a bit shocking: you open a door and you're in another

place. The threshold prepares you to enter another world; architecture is like a door to another reality. The threshold is sometimes understood as a space in itself. In the Gerzso Gerzso Gerzso project, which is a series of staples that cover each curator's cell, when you arrive it's really just one big space with this superimposition of volumes, but it's not the exhibition. We could think that all the residual space, the cells, is a threshold, because there's really nothing to do. What is the program of a threshold? To contemplate, to arrive. It's a moment in which you haven't arrived yet, but you've already entered. It's a somewhat abstract space. In Mexico there are many thresholds. All the old houses sometimes have a zaguán, or an entrance hall, which is also a threshold. Speaking of the threshold and the Serpentine project, the pavilion itself is a threshold to enter the gallery, a kind of annex to the garden. I like to understand it as an access. The wall goes in the direction of the gallery entrance. Even though it feels like an opaque wall, it could be understood as a threshold that prepares you in a certain way to see an exhibition. It serves as a connection between the interior and the garden.

Patio: *What's interesting about the pavilion is that it's not only a physical threshold, but it's also a defined time. It's a temporal threshold that will be there at a specific moment and then simply moves.*

Alessandro: Exactly. It's beautiful that it starts in summer and ends in autumn. The sun radically changes its angle. The threshold can be precisely the parenthesis that exists when you visit a space, because you visit for a few minutes, a few hours. In this case you visit it in a short period and luck is what you get: what time you went, how the day turned out for you. The light of the pavilion will change a lot from summer to October. Being built with brick columns that are vertical stacks superimposed, it's a pavilion that activates transparency as you walk through it. Until you're walking with the hole, you don't see the hole because you see it as opaque. As you walk, the pavilion opens to the exterior and then you stop again.

That's an experiment, but it can also be understood as a dynamic threshold: when you move, it activates the pavilion; when you stop, it changes.

Patio: *Yesterday we were at Barragán's Capuchinas project. The way he handles thresholds, time... the whole project is threshold after threshold. What references, especially here in Mexico or in Latin America, your work has had from the pavilion, but also in the evolution of these 10 years.*

Alessandro: What has most interested or absorbed us is the street, the phenomena we see in Mexico of how people solve their needs, construction. It tells you a lot about how closed we sometimes are as architects. Or, seeing it positively, how open the power to design a space is.

Pasajeros 03,
LANZA Atelier, 2018

The possibilities are quite broad. When you learn from the street, you learn about economy, ingenuity, how to use materials differently.

We've all seen it. That opens your constructive perspective, strategy, ideas. But what has most inspired us in these 10 years or more is really what is observed everywhere, where it's not yet architecture, but there's much more there than what we see.

Patio: *You mentioned the zaguán as part of the threshold. Do you have any more specific reference to the type of architecture seen in Mexican houses or in our Latin American culture?*

Alessandro: In Mexico, in almost all houses, you enter into a patio. I like the theme of the zaguán because it's an abstract space where the program isn't so defined. Additionally, churches and cathedrals always have that entrance garden which is also a zaguán that's preparing you. You're no longer on the street, you're here entering the building, it allows you to see it calmly, with other perspectives, without the city in front. They're spaces we try to create. Little by little the specificity of the program is erased. We also try to do it in furniture, where we try to stop calling them "table" or "chair" and make them like surfaces that allow you to do more things.

Patio: *This theme relates to the use of materials. Thinking about the transition of spaces, the transition of green spaces, the transformation from a tree to wood, from ceramic or clay to brick. How do you see the use of green spaces, plants, nature? It's something very present in Latin America and*

with Latin architects. It's something very special that we live in our cities, especially here in Mexico City.

Alessandro: In terms of materiality, we love natural materials over anything artificial. But the truth is that wherever we build, and what's around, is what we try to incorporate into the project. In itself it's already quite sustainable in terms of transportation and local business. There's rarely not a natural or earthen material that can be used. So, generally, whatever is there is what we try to use. We also try to keep the materials in projects minimal. We love the idea of removing unnecessary materials and achieving everything through the encounter. Speaking of exterior space, we really like that in materials there's no division between what's outside and what's inside. If we're on the ground floor, I prefer that the floor used in patios or in the interior be almost the same. You open the doors and what's outside extends with what's inside. Because if not, afterwards you treat what's outside as a bit separate. In these climates where the vegetation is so beautiful, I think as architects we make the backgrounds, not so much what's inside. It's always very beautiful to see the plants that projects have. It's always a privilege to have so much vegetation and the climate that experiences much freedom in the space.

Patio: *Before reaching this milestone that the Serpentine pavilion represents, how do you see the public space work you've done with those more ethereal installations that last a certain time and then vanish?*

Alessandro: It's a very different experiment. How we approach this type of project is very different from how we approach a house. Like what we did at Concéntrico in Logroño or in the park in Polanco, we always treat it first with respect to waste: trying not to make trash. We're not working for them to dismantle it in a week. So, first is to make it so it can be built without generating waste. The truth is that always leads us to more creative solutions, completely different from what you could do. We try to have these projects involve people's activity. In the Concéntrico one, which is rings of bricks, people moved the bricks a little, played with them, jumped over them... Many activities happened that we never planned. Making a project that has the openness and flexibility for different situations to happen is what we'll always seek: not trying to impose a certain activity or certain expression.

Patio: *That also makes me think that, with Latinos as a culture, we're very accustomed to accepting the unpredictable, the informal. I think we're a very flexible culture and it shows in the work of many architects. We're very open to other activities, to letting things happen, trees grow, people play, other animals arrive. It's interesting to see how that translates into the materiality or form of the projects: that they're simpler, that they let themselves be transformed by people.*

Alessandro: Yes, because the economic part comes in. Here all architecture is as economical as possible. The truth is there's never a budget, but that forces you to work

more. This extra work is very good for achieving strategies or approaching very different projects. In South America there's a lot of explosion of use. We're not accustomed to them telling us you can do this here and that there. They're going to do the opposite. Everything will happen. The more you understand that space is abstract, the more it allows. The more it disappears, the more it allows filling by other users, nature, etc.

Patio:*When you arrived, what most impacted me was the wall full of models. Tell me a bit about the office's creative process. What would you say that process is? Do you start through the physical model, through drawings? What's that process like until reaching that part of the project?*

Alessandro: First, we listen a lot to what the clients tell us and the project's situation, so we don't forget what that reality is like. We start in the office working a lot by hand, using pencil and paper models. We dedicate a good percentage of time to the idea. At some point we're on a good path, but afterwards we realize there are many things to fix. So suddenly we start removing; it's a lot of surgery and a lot of redrawing. At some point we let the project's models rest for a few days and it helps us analyze. Generally something always makes noise. So we think: what does it have? We're always jumping a bit between manual work and computer. We make interior images in collage. Eventually we return to make the more finished model. The process could continue infinitely. Luckily, there's always a delivery date; if not, it might not end. Afterwards comes the construction and everything

Serpentine Pavillion, LANZA Atelier, 2026

continues. It's very beautiful that the project can be thought about in a month or in ten. Who knows.

Patio: *Speaking specifically about the Serpentine pavilion…*

Alessandro: The pavilion is a space where there's no physical separation; it's very open. What's beautiful about this pavilion is the connection between the play of the English serpent, the cosmology of it, and the Mexican one. We connect. All the symbolic, or the historical, of rescuing an ancient constructive element and rethinking it contemporarily, I think is the strongest part of the proposal. It's a very reactive and intelligent pavilion.

Patio: *This idea is very attractive, that narrative of having as part of the cosmovision and interpreting the animal in both continents. What other idea do you think stuck? Maybe not necessarily in the project's own conception, but while designing it, that was permeating in relation to what you finally submitted. Was there any other idea that snuck in, that stayed there as part of it?*

Alessandro: No, I really think the pavilion's plan can be like a synthesis, or a summary of what we've done in 10 years. It's very ours. We thought it was very good that it feels very much ours despite having only one wall.

Patio: *Thinking a bit more about the future and what this pavilion will bring, is there any type of project or scale you'd like to explore in the next 10 years?*

Alessandro: The truth is, I prefer a good client to a good program or good budget. I hope we can investigate and make buildings for different contexts. Obviously we love working with art, and making a museum I think is one of the things I'd like the most. What would kill me is if we stopped trying things. Anything, but to always keep trying.

Patio: *Would you like to continue with that ephemeral part of architecture or with something more permanent?*

Alessandro: Yes, why not? What's coming perhaps is a change of scale, and those are the parts we haven't explored as much in the office for being a small office. We have experience, but to start a project we take it as new. We try make things simpler.

Patio:*I think that also represents the maturity of these 10 years, that you can always continue evolving, but there's a consistency that we found very interesting. This discourse of the ephemeral, which may not necessarily be conscious but simply appears because it's natural, fit very well with the narrative we also have in the magazine. At Patio we've talked about it, about thresholds, about all this welcoming that architecture isn't only that building or that plaza, but the elements that compose it, the people themselves.*

Alessandro: Exactly, exactly. I think that's very valuable.

Serpentine Pavillion,
LANZA Atelier, 2026

Mexico:
The Endless Threshold

Words by Marcos Escamilla

Marcos Escamilla-Guerrero *is a Mexican architect, designer, and researcher whose work investigates the role of design in addressing societal challenges. Currently, he serves at Cornell AAP as Visiting Critic, instructing design studios and elective courses. Through his practice, MEAL (Making Experimental Architecture Lab), he operates at the intersection of architecture, urbanism, geospatial analysis, and social justice. Marcos has a particular focus on Latin American representation and alternative spatial practices related to migration and displacement. Marcos is pursuing a PhD in Architecture, Landscape and Design at University of Toronto, he holds a Master of Science in Advanced Architectural Design (MS.AAD, research track) from Cornell AAP and a Bachelor of Architecture from Tecnológico de Monterrey (ITESM-MTY).*

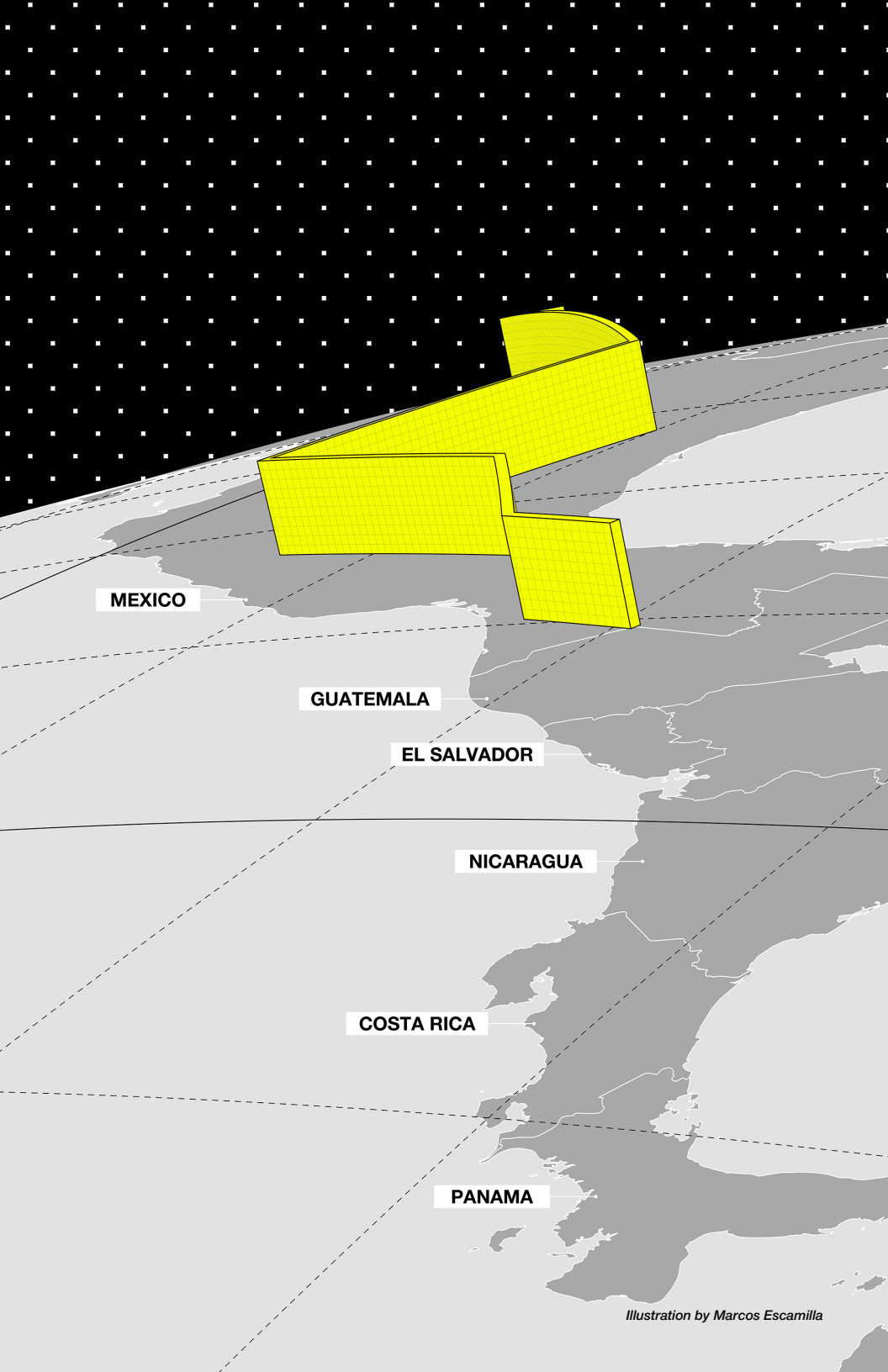


Illustration by Marcos Escamilla

When thinking about the current humanitarian crisis that migration represents across the Americas, it is easy to conceptualize borders as thresholds.

Borders are commonly understood as the spatial devices through which territories begin and end: lines separating one jurisdiction from another. Within these limits we can identify different types of thresholds; those that are explicitly political, drawn through treaties and enforced through walls and checkpoints, and those that are natural, such as rivers, mountains, or jungles that resist human mobility. Yet this is not another essay about border walls or fortified lines. It is not an attempt to analyze a single spatial instance where crossing takes place. Rather, this reflection proposes something different: the possibility of understanding the threshold not as a moment, but as a condition. Not as a line to cross, but as a prolonged environment in which people dwell.

Over the last decade, migration dynamics in the Americas have drastically changed. Mexico in particular has become a territory where the phenomenon demands urgent attention.[1] Mexico is no longer understood only as a country of origin or transit; it has increasingly become a place where large numbers of displaced people remain, seek asylum, and attempt to regularize their status.[2] While migration infrastructures and policies remain insufficient, the country has gradually transformed into an elongated and continuous threshold.[3] For thousands of migrants traveling north from Central and South America, Mexico is no longer simply a country to cross, it has become a territory of suspension.

While conducting fieldwork with migrants in Mexico, I repeatedly heard phrases like these:

"Crossing Mexico is the worst."

"I thought Mexican people were warm and welcoming."

"Here you cannot trust anyone."

These generalized testimonies reveal something deeper than social tension or disappointment. They point to the emergence of what could be described as a vertical wall, a wall not built with concrete or steel, but with conditions. Violence, extortion, bureaucratic obstacles, corruption, and uncertainty accumulate to form a deterrent environment.

Human Rights Watch has documented how migrants and asylum seekers in Mexico are exposed to kidnapping, extortion, sexual violence, assault, and prolonged vulnerability, while more recent enforcement regimes have further enriched smuggling networks and criminal actors operating along migration routes.[4] Rather than stopping migrants at a single boundary, this wall stretches across the entire country. In this sense,

Mexico has become an endless wall, one that migrants must cross slowly, repeatedly, and often painfully.

The tragic evidence of this condition is well documented. In San Fernando, Tamaulipas, seventy-two migrants

Mexico Maze
Illustration by Pablo Useche

were massacred in 2010 in one of the most brutal crimes committed against people in transit through Mexico.[5] More recently, a fire at a migrant detention facility in Ciudad Juárez killed dozens of people in March 2023, exposing once again the lethal consequences of detention, neglect, and institutional failure.[6]

These events are not isolated tragedies but symptoms of a larger structure of passage, one where movement is constantly interrupted by danger, negotiation, and waiting. The violence surrounding migration in Mexico is not incidental; it has become one of the defining conditions through which mobility is governed and experienced.[4] What emerges from this condition is a geography of nested thresholds. The migrant journey across Mexico is not defined by a single crossing but by countless smaller ones embedded within each other.

How many doors must a migrant cross during this journey?

How many checkpoints, shelters, train stations, or improvised camps become temporary thresholds along the way?

How many nights are spent moving from one place of refuge to another?

Each shelter becomes a threshold between exhaustion and rest.

Each checkpoint becomes a threshold between movement and detention.

At the same time, Mexico is increasingly becoming a country of destination rather than merely one of passage.[2] However, arrival does not necessarily mean resolution. During a recent visit to Casa Tochan, a migrant shelter in Mexico City, many residents shared stories about the immense difficulty of obtaining legal status. Months and sometimes years are spent navigating bureaucratic procedures that rarely provide clear answers. This experience is consistent with broader analyses showing that, although Mexico's legal framework for refugee protection has expanded, implementation remains slow, uneven, and often overwhelmed by the scale of demand.[1] In practice, many people remain suspended between legal categories, territories, and futures.[3]

In this sense, even those who remain in Mexico continue to inhabit a threshold condition. They live in a prolonged state of becoming, neither fully integrated nor entirely transient. Waiting for documentation, waiting for employment opportunities, waiting for the possibility that migration policies in the United States might once again shift. As Francisco Alba has argued, many migrants now remain in Mexico and regularize their status not necessarily because movement has ended, but because reaching the United States has become increasingly difficult and uncertain.[2] To dwell in Mexico today, for many migrants, is to dwell within an extended threshold.

For decades, the most visible symbol of migration control in the Americas has been the wall between Mexico and the United States. Similarly, the Darién Gap has been widely described as one of the most dangerous migration routes in the hemisphere.[7] Yet these landscapes represent only singular moments within a much larger geography of passage. Perhaps the largest threshold in the Americas is neither the border wall nor the jungle. Perhaps the largest threshold is Mexico itself: a country where the threshold is not defined by a single crossing, but by a constellation of migration corridors shaped by criminal

violence, bureaucratic barriers, fragile or non-existing infrastructures of care, and an ongoing reluctance to fully acknowledge the scale of the humanitarian crisis unfolding within its territory.

Here, the threshold does not end at the border, it unfolds across the land, and for those moving north, it often seems endless.

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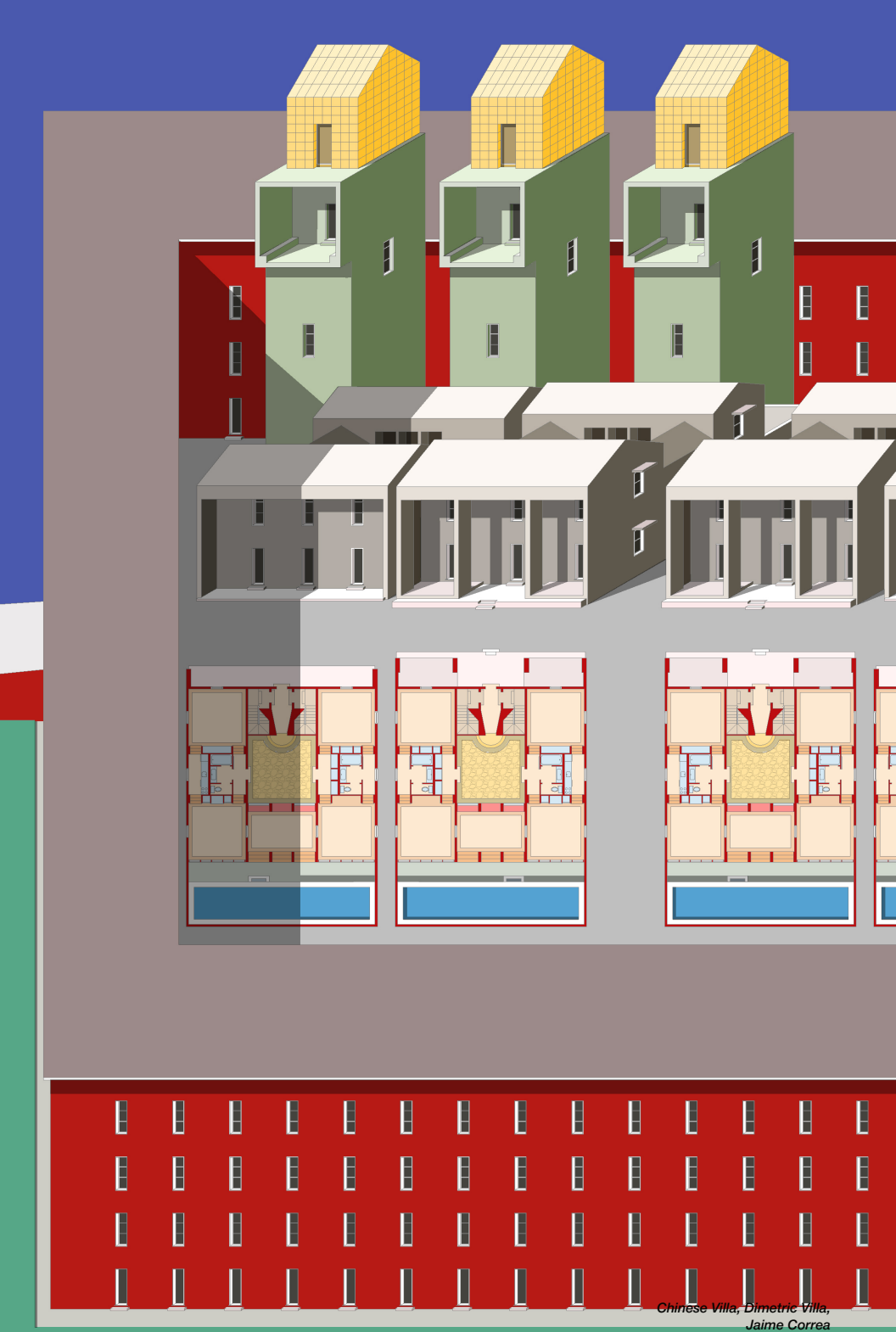
Re-Occupied Thresholds: *Physical and Imaginary*

Text written by Jaime Correa

***Jaime Correa** is the Director of the Undergraduate Program and Associate Professor in Practice at the University of Miami School of Architecture, where he was also the Knight Professor in Community Building and former Director of the Master of Urban Design. He teaches design, theory/history, housing, and representation in Miami and Rome. His paper practice, Jaime Correa and Associates, explores the intersection of architecture, art, philosophy, culture, and urbanism. He is one of the 14 architects who launched the American New Urbanism movement, one of its key promoters in Latin America and Europe, and one of its most significant critics. From 2013 to 2017, he served as a Climate Reality Mentor under Al Gore. He is the author of "Unbuilt Intentions: towards a new phenomenology of cities and architecture," "Redacted Distillations: Le Corbusier's transformative erasures," "Contemporary Spolia," and "New Harmony: a counterproposal to Charles Fourier's Phalanstery," among others, as well as 17 book chapters and numerous articles in peer-reviewed journals, newspapers, and magazines. He resides in Miami with his wife and family.*

"A threshold is a transition to the unknown. Beyond it, a completely different state of being begins. Thus, death is always inscribed in its place. In all rites of passage, one dies to be reborn beyond the threshold. Here death is experienced as transition: whoever crosses the boundary subjects themselves to a transformation. As a place of transformation, the threshold hurts."

Byung-Chul Han, The expulsion of the other



Chinese Villa, Dimetric Villa,
Jaime Correa

Modern cities and architecture emerged not as the triumphant construction of new spatial certainties but as a unique systematic configuration of distinct boundaries. In our current historical condition, thresholds are fundamental for the understanding of both cities and architecture.

The concept of "threshold" is understood as the transitional space where architecture and urbanism reveal their ambitions and limitations; a threshold cannot be simply a formal device or an experiential hinge. It must instead be read as a critical symptom of architecture's historical condition within the context of the modern capitalist city.

The systematic dissolution of the classical city, once ordered by symbolic gateways, ritual sequences, and hierarchical interior spaces, inaugurates a spatial condition in which transitional threshold spaces become the dominant theme of cities and architecture. In the modern capitalist city, the concept of threshold ceases to be a mere architectural device mediating inside and outside; on the contrary, it becomes the very spot where the contradictions of modernity become evident and transparent. In the premodern urban formations, thresholds articulated symbolic hierarchies and ritual transitions. Gates, porticoes, atria, and courtyards structured spatial meaning through legible sequences.

In the traditional city, thresholds structured human experience through recognizable gradations: street to portico, portico to atrium, atrium to courtyard, courtyard to chambers, etc. These sequences produced a legible continuity between collective life and individual dwelling – between the public and the private realm. The traditional ideas of belonging were historically tied to stable places such as hometowns, neighborhoods, or cultural landscapes. Today, however, globalization, migration, and digital connectivity have transformed this relationship.

Contemporary cities and architecture are therefore compelled to operate within a fragmented field shaped by industrialization, infrastructural expansions, and the abstraction of social relations. Modernity relentlessly dissolved the symbolic clarity of the traditional city. Thresholds lost their stable representational function and transformed themselves into mere technical interfaces regulating circulation, control, and productivity.

In our current condition of super-modernity, thresholds are no longer a symbolic hinge but a functional interface, calibrated to regulate circulation, visibility, and access. We are nowadays accustomed to environments that people inhabit only briefly, often without forming deep emotional or social attachments. Despite their apparent neutrality, these spaces structure our everyday experience and influence how individuals perceive identity and community.

The newest metropolis with its less rooted humanity intensifies this

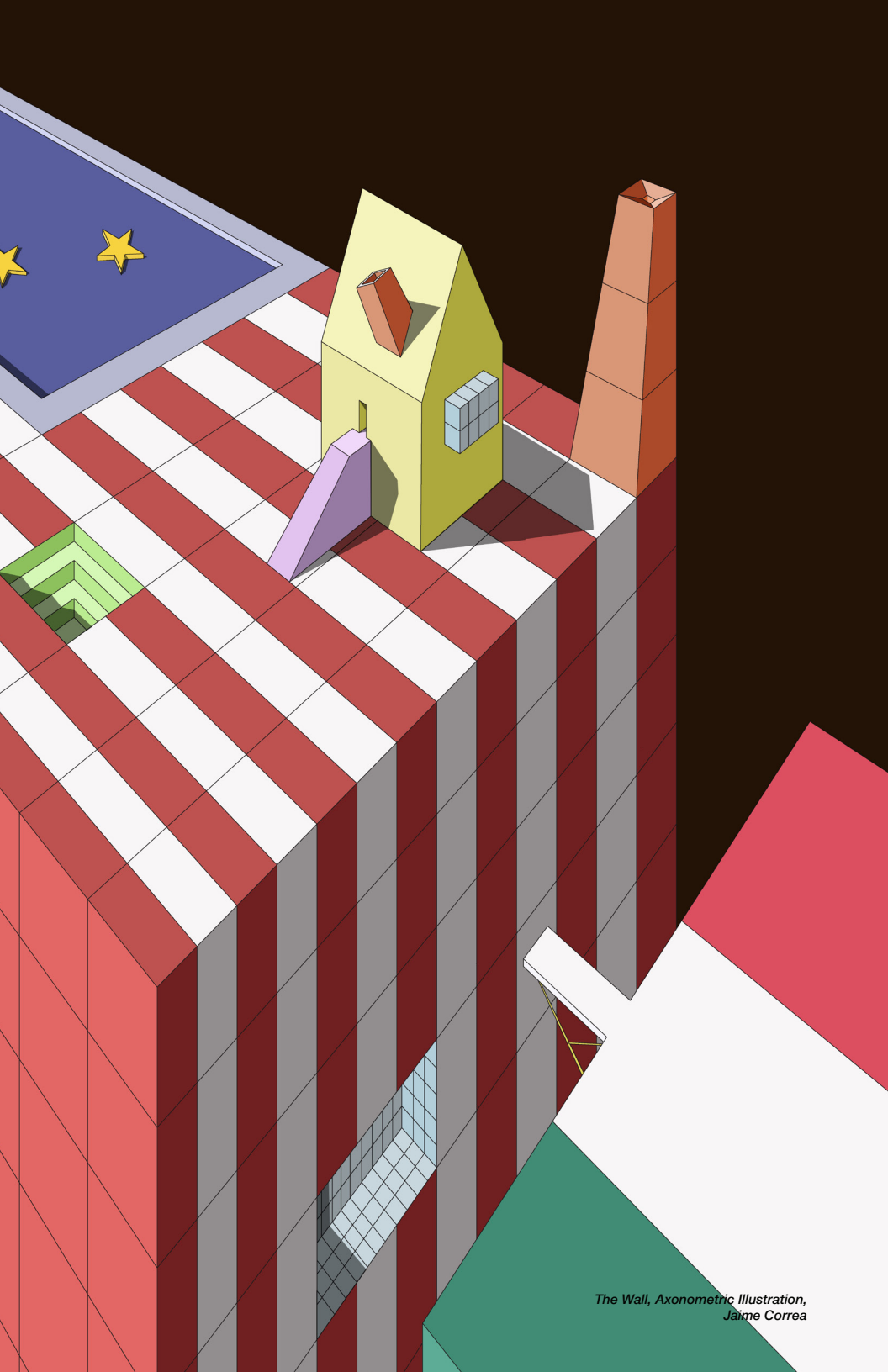
tension. In refugee camps, airports, waiting zones, border crossings, and emergency detention centers, there is what Giorgio Agamben has called a “state of exception,” or a threshold space where normal human and political rights are simply suspended; spaces which appear anonymous and interchangeable and which, nevertheless, are deeply embedded in global economic and political processes. Airports connect distant territories and cultures, yet they also reinforce the concept of thresholds through security protocols and bureaucratic procedures; passport control areas, detention rooms, international transit corridors, and waiting lounges are what Marc Augé has called ‘non-spaces.”

The thresholds of contemporary architecture are not only spatial transitions but epistemological fractures. They mark the point at which architecture confronts its own inability to reconcile aesthetic autonomy with socio-economic determination. These embody a spatial regime in which movement is orchestrated or prevented and where identity is provisional. And yet, the threshold also retains a residual critical potential. Precisely because it is a zone of ambiguity, it reveals the fractures underlying modern spatial ideology. The glazed façade, a promise of societal transparency, also produces a deliberate opportunity for acts of surveillance; the seamless circulation diagram that proclaims efficiency conceals new forms of exclusion.

To engage the notion of thresholds today is to confront the unfinished project of modernity as a supra-modern project where a multiplicity of new narratives of belonging can be articulated. It requires recognizing that architecture operates within a field of forces that continually reshape the conditions of our spatial experiences. It is an invitation to reframe how spatial disciplines understand community in an era marked by migration, technological mediation, and continuous movement. It is a new moment to conceive imaginary situations where spaces are less fixed and a bit more heroic. Within these conditions, the threshold must be re-occupied; and, this re-occupation shall become the locus where these forces materialize, where human beings encounter both the possibility of transformation and the risk of alienation.

To design contemporary thresholds is therefore to engage a critical terrain in which these unresolved tensions may still articulate moments of awareness, pause, and resistance.

In this sense, the task of contemporary architecture practice is not to nostalgically restore the lost clarity of premodern spatial hierarchies, nor to celebrate the total dissolution of boundaries. Rather, it is to re-inscribe the re-occupied threshold as a critical instrument, capable of articulating moments of pause, recognition, and existential orientation within the accelerated landscapes of contemporary life. Only by acknowledging the threshold as a space of conflict, one between continuity and rupture, openness and control, dwelling and displacement, can urban design and architecture reclaim their capacity to construct meaningful spatial narratives in an age defined by perpetual transition.



The Wall, Axonometric Illustration,
Jaime Correa

Imagination is the most critical tool in the project of re-occupation. By redesigning everyday environments as spaces of potential encounter rather than mere conduits, designers can open possibilities for more inclusive spatial narratives. Small, yet heroic, real or imaginary interventions can transform how individuals perceive their own presences within our current socio-economic and political environment. To illustrate how these concepts can be applied in contemporary cities and architecture, I would like to take a moment to show three paradigmatic projects of my Miami-based office, an uncanny professional practice with the deep academic slant of a Latin-American who grew up reading magical realism novels in the land of Macondo. For us, the notion of thresholds is a privileged locus for a critique of cities and architecture. In the context of the following three paper projects, sometimes ambitious and a bit controversial, I would like to demonstrate how, for the sake of community discussion, thresholds manifest as places where the disciplines of urban design and architecture reflect on their historical complicity while attempting, however provisionally and imaginatively, to construct new narratives of spatial consciousness.

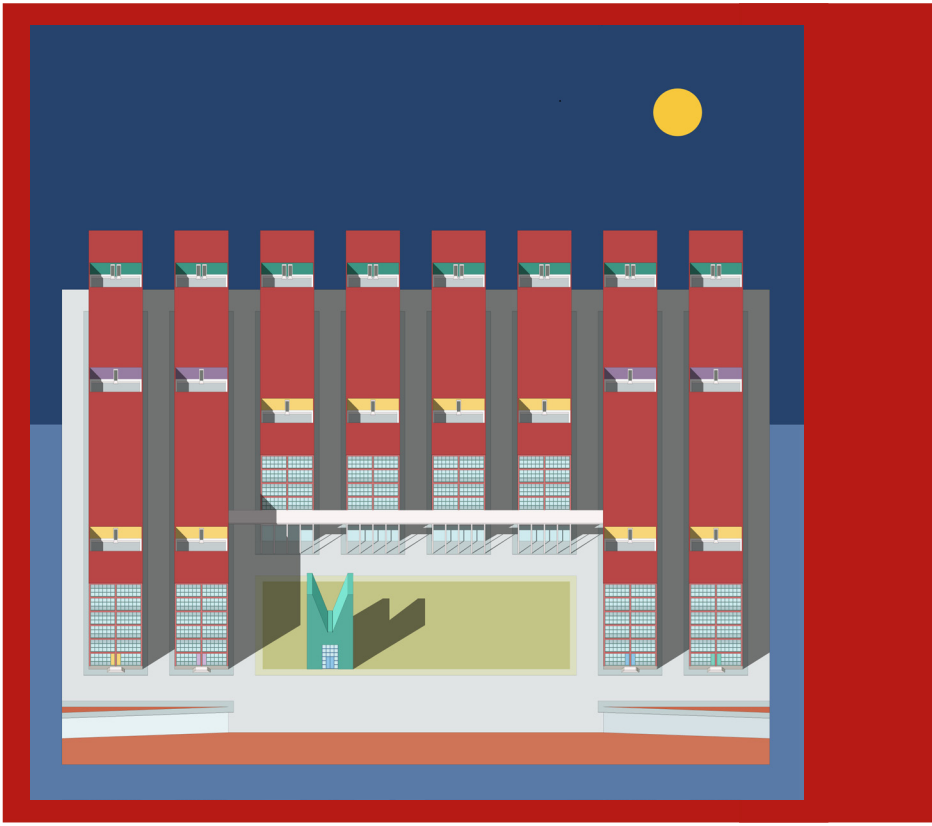
1. The Wall

This project is not a political manifesto but an ontological apparatus – exposing rather than resolving contradictions. The Wall positions itself as a counterproposal to the very idea of the wall, yet it does so by radicalizing its logic. The wall is no longer a line, nor even a barrier, but a globally occupied, thickened structure. What was territory becomes residue; what was dispersed becomes compressed. The gesture paradoxically seeks to return the land beyond to indigenous populations whose displacement underlies the modern nation-state.

The Wall operates as total threshold, the physical spatialization of “state of exception” at continental scale. It is neither inside nor outside, but a suspended zone where juridical, political, and spatial orders collapse into indeterminacy. Within its thickness, habitation, circulation, production, and spectacle coexist without hierarchy. On one side, “The Wall Hotel” emerges as a monument to capitalist excess. On the Mexico side, an almost absolute void – a diving board projecting into an abyss. This asymmetry inscribes unequal desire, where progress becomes indistinguishable from risk.

The Wall becomes the ultimate non-place: transit, anonymity, abstraction, yet paradoxically fixed and monumental. Within this radical abstraction, a latent ethical claim persists. By vacating the remainder of the territory, the project gestures toward the restitution of land to indigenous peoples and the regeneration of natural systems.

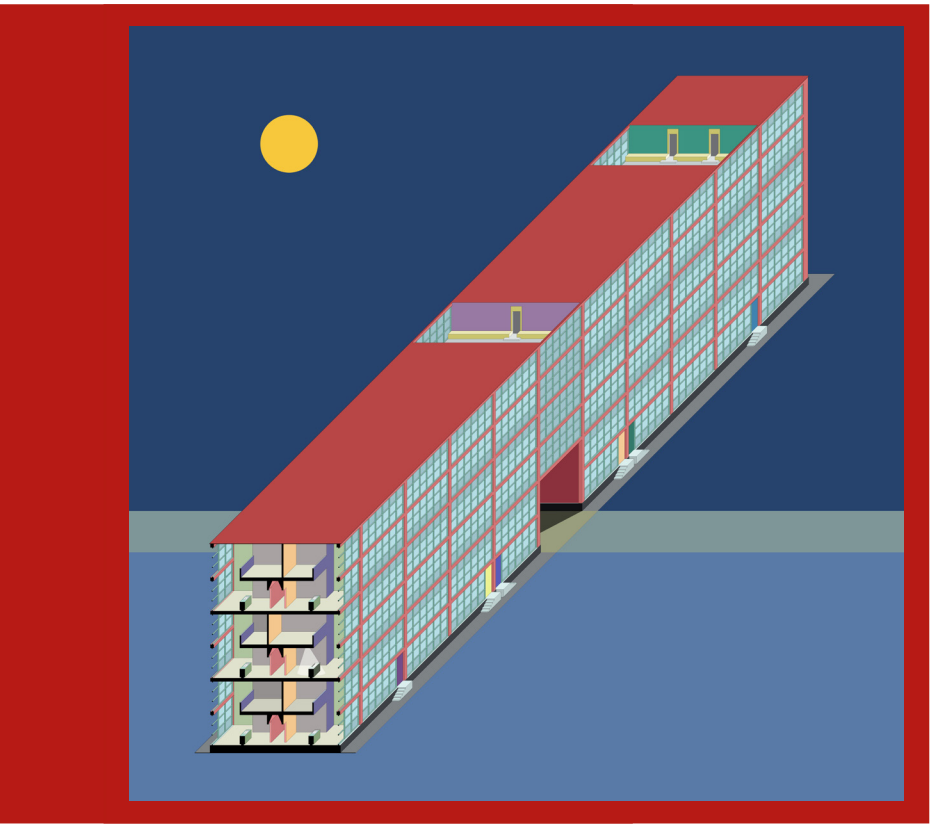
The Wall embodies irreconcilable tensions: domination and restitution, enclosure and release, memory and erasure. The project must be understood as a critical construct – a premonition revealing how contemporary architecture, confronted with displacement, environmental degradation, and historical injustice, operates within continuous exception. Architecture no longer produces objects, but thresholds – totalizing, unstable spaces where the future remains suspended.



2. Refugee Slabs

This project delineates a territorial mechanism of disagreement – emerging from necessity rather than desire. The relocation of Miami to northern Florida high grounds, near Arcadia, unfolds as an operation conditioned by sea-level rise. Five identical urban units align along the F.E.C. railroad track. Their gridded configuration – derived from New York, Savannah, Philadelphia, Charleston – must be read not as homage, but as exhaustion of the architectural project itself.

The five units, recalling the letters M-I-A-M-I, stage a fragmented persistence of identity. Memory is inscribed in repetition. The perimeter condition is most critical: a continuous transportation wall encircles the settlements as infrastructure and threshold. This wall becomes a thickened zone – simultaneously transportation system, food protection, and potential dwelling. Food production is inscribed within its thickness, collapsing the distinction between infrastructure and territory. The project engages Augé's ṅon-space" as a landscape of repetition and anonymity. Yet these non-places acquire paradoxical permanence – not spaces of passage, but of enforced dwelling, where identity is suspended rather than



Refugee Slabs, Dimetric Plaza
Jaime Correa

erased. This proposal must be read as a premonition, revealing a future where the city, confronted by sea-level rise and environmental collapse, is forced into a continuous “state of exception.” Architecture must operate within the fragile conditions that sustain it.

3. Chinese Village

This is not merely a traditional Chinese village, but the construction of a critical field where an occupied threshold is its main protagonist. Set within 23 acres in Guangdong Province, the project organizes862 dwelling units at approximately 32 du/acre: the bunker tower (6 single-family units), the regional single block house (312 units), and the occupied wall threshold (544 apartments). The perimeter wall constitutes the project’s most significant gesture. The continuous apartment building forms an occupied wall, a thickened boundary not as enclosure but as threshold. Elevated 14 feet above ground and accessed through four cardinal points, the wall is neither defensive nor open. Here, the project materializes Agamben’s “state of exception,” a condition in which the distinction between inside and outside is rendered indeterminate.

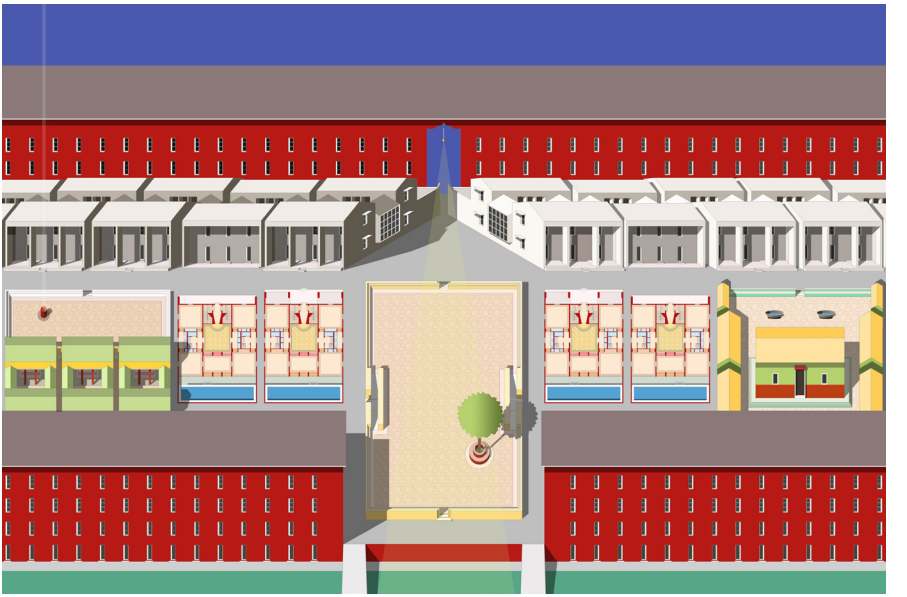
The internal configuration unfolds as calibrated voids. At the center, a slightly raised secular space hosts a single tree encircled by a bench – an intentional absence of monumentality. East and west, Taoist and Buddhist temples establish a dual spiritual axis. Yet these gestures do not restore a nostalgic image of tradition. Instead, they operate within Marc Auge's terrain of the 'non-place." The occupied threshold wall becomes a paradoxical 'non-place" of permanence: a space of passage resisting both anonymity and fixity.

By transforming the perimeter into an occupied threshold, architecture no longer mediates between cultural memory and contemporary urbanization – it inhabits their conflict. This Chinese Village is not a place in the traditional sense, but a critical territory suspended in continuous exception.

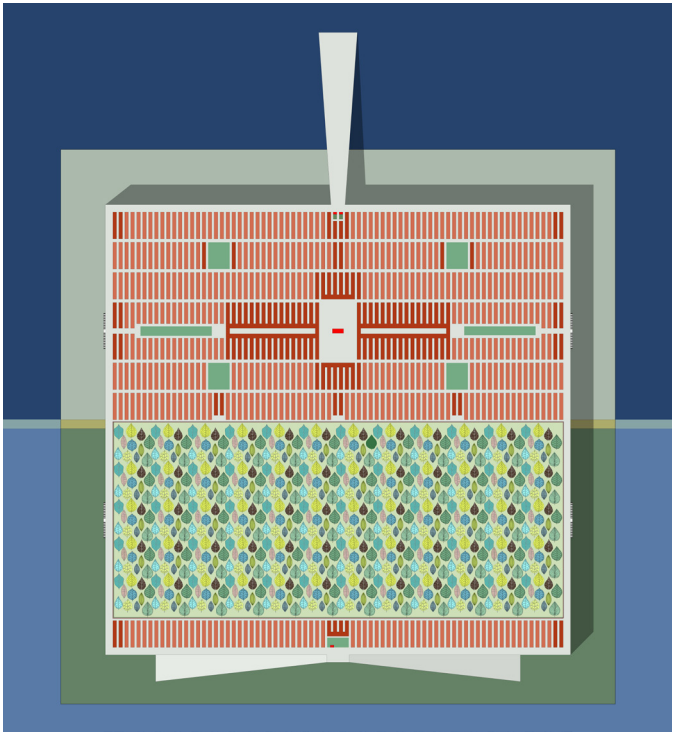
Conclusion

These projects and theories do not culminate in a synthesis; they resist it. What emerges instead is the recognition of the concept of threshold as the irreducible site in which architecture encounters its own limits. No longer a mediating device between interior and exterior, the threshold is revealed as a critical fracture – an operative condition in which the contradictions of super-modernity are neither resolved nor concealed but exposed in their full intensity. As initially asserted by Byung-Chul Han, the threshold is not a passage but a moment of transformation, a locus where the subject is destabilized and reconstituted within a field of forces that exceed normal architectural intentions.

In the Chinese Village, the Refugee Slabs, or The Wall, architecture



Chinese Village, Dimetric Detail, Jaime Correa



Refugee Slabs, Plan,
Jaime Correa

abandons its illusion of autonomy and submits to the logic of necessity, displacement, and abstraction. These projects do not restore the lost coherence of the premodern city, nor do they indulge in the myth of continuity. Instead, they construct territories of tension – inhabited limits in which dwelling is inseparable from estrangement, and form is subordinated to imaginative processes. The threshold becomes the site where architecture reveals its complicity with the systems it once sought to transcend.

To re-occupy, therefore, is not to reclaim stability, but to inhabit instability consciously. It is within this unresolved condition that architecture may still articulate a critical consciousness, one that does not promise redemption but one that will insist on the purity of our rational thoughts and on the capacity for human abstraction. In the shadow of artificial intelligence and its potential to transform the professional discipline of architecture as we know it, let us celebrate our imagination and capacity to connect disparate issues as, perhaps, the last remnant of humanity.

Miami, March 31, 2026, at 2:05 pm.

Handshake Geographies:
Building in Spaces we Weren't Meant to Stay

Text written by Patricio Muñoz

***Patricio Muñoz** is a Chilean architect, urban designer, and researcher whose work moves across architecture, urban design, and climate-oriented planning. He currently works as an Urban Designer at Prior + Partners in London, where he contributes to large-scale urban projects. His professional experience includes urban design and planning roles at DLR Group in New York and the Government of Santiago, as well as architectural practice at Taller Opera Prima in Chile. Patricio holds a M.S. in Architecture and Urban Design from Columbia University GSAPP, where he received the Honor Award for Excellence in Urban Design and served as Editor in Chief for Patio Magazine. He also holds a Bachelor of Architecture from Universidad de Chile. His work reflects a sustained interest in urban systems, environmental planning, visual communication, and the role of design in shaping more resilient and equitable territories.*

Obra Común Foundation was founded in Santiago, Chile, in 2020 and formally established in 2024 as an organization dedicated to bridging neighborhoods, designers, and social professionals. The foundation believes that meaningful change emerges through collaboration and mutual trust. Through participatory processes, it accompanies communities in their pursuit of territorial justice, providing the tools and knowledge necessary to co-design solutions grounded in local needs and realities. Its mission is to support initiatives that strengthen social bonds and collective agency, guided by principles of respect, care, and reciprocity. The foundation is actively led by Maria Yolin, Tomás Bustamante, Carla Rivera, Fernanda Zamorano, and Patricio Muñoz.

Group Walking, Obra Común

Collaborative Building, Obra Común

Part 1: The Illusion of Permanence and the Friction of the Soil

When I think back on the mapping project we did in the settlement, the first thing that hits me is just the general atmosphere of it all. It was a deeply fascinating, visceral experience.

I still carry these incredibly vivid memories of walking the dirt paths alongside the folks who actually live there. We'd be wandering through the camp, kicking up dust, and just casually tossing around ideas for what we should name the streets. You could literally feel this heavy, palpable sense of hope hanging in the air.

I truly believe that the physical act of mapping the neighborhood woke something up inside the community.

It sparked this collective illusion—and I mean that in the best, most hopeful sense of the word—of permanence. For so long, living there meant feeling transient, but seeing the space laid out made people feel anchored. They felt a sudden, fierce attachment to the soil beneath their feet. And I remember looking at the whole process and thinking, Man, they really thought this through. Getting to mapping sessions, seeing the physical maps strung up, it just felt so beautifully executed. It built this intense spatial awareness. It gave the neighborhood a specific, undeniable identity.

But, you know, it absolutely wasn't without its drama. When you're dealing with land, you're dealing with friction. During the mapping days, tensions flared up constantly. We had community leaders who felt totally sidelined. I remember this one guy—I can't even remember his name, honestly—who didn't even live in the settlement

anymore, but he still demanded to call the shots. That caused a huge rift, because there were other folks actually living in the dirt of that specific sector who made way more sense to lead the charge.

Broadly speaking, almost every single piece of tension I witnessed during the entire Obra Común process boiled down to one thing: the clash between individual survival and collective well-being. It was the eternal fight between what someone desperately wanted for their own tiny plot of land, and the sacrifices required to actually organize as a community to make the whole environment livable.

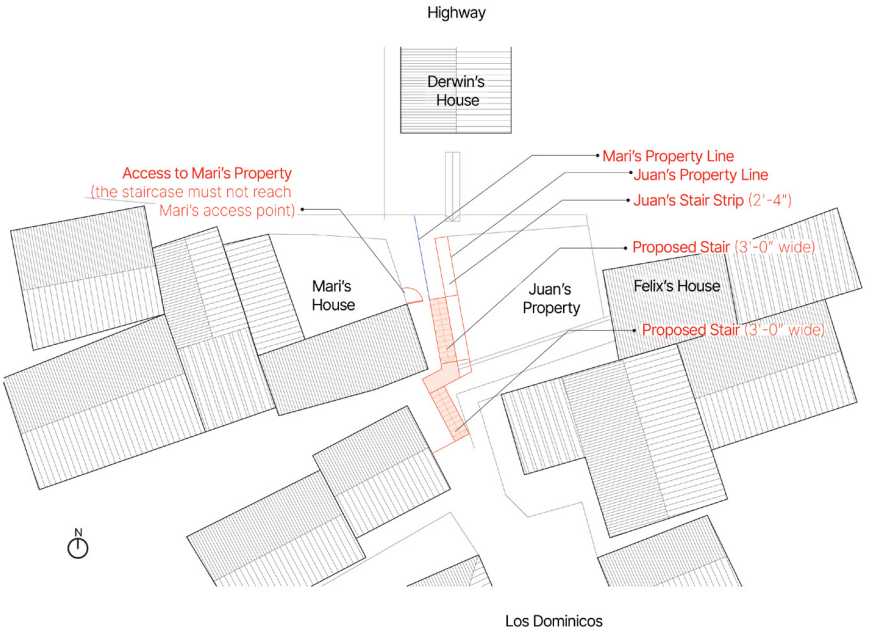
Part 2: Measuring the Unwritten / The Edges We Invent

You have to understand how land ownership works out there. It's highly... let's call it "creative." It's entirely word-of-mouth. Someone buys a patch of dirt off someone else, and the transaction is just a handshake. There are no blueprints, no city zoning, no legal deeds, no easements. Just an agreement between two, maybe three or four people. Because of that, folks feel this fierce, defensive ownership over their space, but it's not backed by anything on paper.

That opens the door to total chaos. Every conversation turns into, "My yard went up to this rock," and "No, my line is over by that tree." I remember vividly when we tried to carve out a basic six-meter width for the main roads so a firetruck could actually navigate the camp. The pushback was intense. People wanted to expand their shacks outward, and that individual desire slammed right into the community's desperate need for basic disaster prevention.

Or take the Simón Bolívar ravine. That's where neighbor Mari and

People Gathering Around Map, Obra Común



Agreement Sketch, Obra Común

neighbor Derwin lived. We needed to put an emergency staircase down that steep drop. It was a nightmare of negotiations. We had to sit there and untangle what belonged to who, what belonged to the community, and what someone stubbornly claimed just because they handed cash to a stranger five years ago.

And that's exactly why the interventions chosen by Obra Común & CIVIM were so completely spot on. They went straight for the open wound: the boundaries. By mapping the space, hanging those maps up, and physically tracing the evacuation routes, they took that chaotic, "creative" land tenure and dragged it into reality. They grounded it.

Part 3: Leaving the Savior at the Border

But what really stuck with me—what I think is the most vital part of this whole story—is how they did it. If I had to describe the vibe of the organizers, I'd say it was profoundly respectful. It was an exercise in radical grassroots organizing.

Usually, when educated professionals drop into an informal settlement, it's a top-down nightmare. It's a savior complex. It's people in clean shoes pointing fingers and saying, "Listen up, here is how you need to live." There was absolutely zero percent of that here.

The approach was entirely peer-to-peer. It was, "Hey neighbor, how are you? Let's figure this out together." It was humble.

Honestly, most of the concrete projects didn't even come from the organizers. That emergency staircase

in the ravine? That was Derwin's idea. He knew his land, he saw the risk, and he proposed the fix. It wasn't some sterile concept airdropped by outsiders. The organizers just helped facilitate the neighbors' own solutions.

Looking back, entering into my own subjective, gut-level feelings about it all, I just feel incredibly grateful for how it played out. There were no massive, empty political promises. Nobody was selling snake oil. It was just a constant, genuine, and quiet invitation to do the hard work of organizing, built entirely on mutual respect and equal footing.

'Nuevo Amanecer' is located in the Cerrillos municipality on the outskirts of Santiago, Chile. The settlement covers roughly 40 hectares, built directly over the closed Lo Errázuriz landfill. It emerged in mid-2020 during the housing crisis brought on by the pandemic. Today, it is the largest informal camp in the metropolitan region, home to around 14,000 people, the vast majority being migrants.

Because the camp sits on a former dump, the soil itself carries severe environmental and structural risks. The dense, unplanned layout makes basic safety, like fire prevention, incredibly difficult.

Obra Común entered this context in 2021. They started with participatory mapping, walking alongside neighbors to figure out the physical realities of the space. Those early maps sparked a series of hands-on projects. Until the end of 2022, they worked closely with the community to tackle raw urban issues, focusing on risk management, defining community spaces, and navigating local leadership dynamics. It was a grounded effort to socially and physically understand the territory.

Group Walking, Obra Común

Raw Threshold:
Between The Available and Biodegradable

Text written by David Barragán

***David Barragán** is an Ecuadorian architect, educator, and partner at Al Borde, the Quito based practice internationally recognized for its experimental, socially engaged, and materially conscious approach to architecture. His work explores collaboration, impermanence, sustainability, and the evolving role of architecture through projects, exhibitions, films, and publications that challenge conventional architectural practice. Barragán has lectured and taught internationally and is part of the faculty at Columbia GSAPP. Al Borde's work has been exhibited at major international venues including the Venice Architecture Biennale, the Chicago Architecture Biennial, and the Sharjah Architecture Triennial.*

Sharjah Architecture Triennial, Al Borde,
Render by Pinxcel

Sharjah Architecture Triennial, Al Borde,
Render by Pinxcel

Sharjah Architecture Triennial - The Beauty of the Impermanence

Curator: Tosin Oshinowo

Architects: Al Borde (David Barragán, María Fernanda Heredia & Melissa Naranjo)

Location: Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

Design: 2022-2023

Construction: 2023

Sharjah Architecture Triennial, Al Borde, Render by Pinxcel

In a context where everything is within reach, where anything is possible to acquire from anywhere, and the capitalist development approach has eroded the local identity to the extent of destroying historic neighborhoods, a fundamental question arises: What does it mean to be local?

The Al Qasimiyah school has relinquished its role as a primary school and transformed into one of the venues for the SAT (Sharjah Architecture Triennial). In this shift of purpose, the school evolves from a confined space within a perimeter wall, with a mission to care for children, to aspiring to become an open space that connects with its surroundings and the city. This newfound openness generates fresh ways of occupying the area. The new pedestrian accesses from the North and West converge onto a platform, providing an opportunity to highlight this meeting point and establish a welcoming threshold.

This threshold is defined by a shadow that creates the conditions for inhabiting the exterior. It requires a structure that is possible to build with any available material. However, in a context where “everything” is “available,” this concept becomes blurry. Considering the economy of effort draws a path to pursue maximum efficiency in transforming

Sharjah Architecture Triennial, Al Borde,
Image by Danko Stjepanovic

raw materials into architectural elements, thus minimizing the energy used in production, processing, and transportation of materials.
The Sharjah Electricity, Water, and Gas Authority (SEWA) has initiated a process of replacing wooden poles with metal ones, which has resulted in a hundred preserved wooden poles stored in their depot. The best ones are selected, damaged ends cut off, and a package of logs of various sizes is obtained, tall enough to assemble a structure from which the shadow suspends.

The shade is created using palm tree mats, a material available in the area. It used in various applications, from the floors of houses to the ceilings of the souks, and even in enclosures. These mats can be easily acquired in any bazaar, offering a variety of types, sizes, shapes, and textures.

This design approach results in a raw and tactile work; crafted with natural materials that allow us to establish an intimate and direct discourse with the place, grounding it on site.

The threshold will serve to welcome visitors and, simultaneously, become a way to experience and test the use of this new space, inviting them to cross its boundaries.

The project will endure as long as the space requires, providing the flexibility to be assembled and disassembled in other locations. When the time comes to conclude its use, the poles can return to the depot, awaiting a new purpose, while the mats' versatility may easily find another use. There will come a day when these materials naturally degrade, and the cycle of life will close harmoniously with nature.

Sharjah Architecture Triennial, Al Borde, Render by Ahmed Osama

Sharjah Architecture Triennial, Al Borde,
Image by Ieva Saudargaite

LEADERS FITNESS

Sharjah Architecture Triennial, Al Borde,
Image by Danko Stjepanovic

Threshold:
Space of Contradiction

Text written by Sebastián Serna

***Sebastián Serna** is a Colombian architect, educator, and founder of Taller de S, a Bogota-based practice recognized for its sensitive interventions in historic buildings and consolidated urban environments. A graduate of the Universidad de los Andes, his work explores the relationship between architecture, memory, and the transformation of existing urban fabrics. Serna's projects have received multiple distinctions at the Colombian Architecture Biennials, including the National Architecture Award in 2019. Alongside his professional practice, he has taught architecture at several leading Colombian universities, contributing to critical discussions on heritage, city-making, and contemporary architectural culture.*

"Opposites don't disappear, but merge for an instant. It's something like a suspension of the spirit: time doesn't weigh."

-Octavio Paz
El Arco y La Lira (1956)

There's a space that's everything and nothing, that doesn't add to the program yet still becomes encounter, transition, threshold, void.

We understand thresholds through three conditions: lines that become fixed, the in-between where opposites coexist, and that which sustains without appearing. These are not understood as fixed categories, but rather as moments in which this idea is placed under tension in different ways. At times it solidifies and becomes a barrier; at others it opens and allows coexistence; while at times it remains latent, operating from what's unseen.

Lines that Become Fixed
Transition Turned into a Barrier

There are also borders that operate as transitions built over time. Borders that separate the south from the north, a nomenclature that divides a city. And what remains in between? It is worth questioning at what geographical point the south of the city truly begins. Historically, this transition has mutated into a protective belt driven by urban fear, rather than a natural threshold. These are lines that become fixed. Therefore, they are thresholds that must be crossed with fear. Not the kind of fear produced by a dark passage, one that has always filled us with anticipation and excitement, but a fear that fixes and prevents movement.

In the project *El otro lado de la Séptima*, the intention isn't to erase that line, it is to transform it into a habitable thickness. Through interventions such as the pedestrianization of the Seventh avenue, the activation of the neighborhood Las Cruces, and the insertion of projects like *Pasajes and La Garza*, the line begins to decompose into multiple layers. The hardness is diluted not by eliminating the limit, but by multiplying the possibilities of crossing it. The transition stops being a fixed border and becomes a field of negotiation.

In this sense, this condition stops being abstract and becomes deeply material. The line that separates isn't just an idea, it is an accumulated construction: road infrastructure, institutional buildings, disproportionate scales, curbs that disregard the body.

The protective belt then becomes a threshold, a physical barrier that interrupts the flow between north and south. What was once a system of connection, the Salt Route, the tram, hardens until it becomes a limit.

El Otro Lado de la Séptima, Diagram, Sebastián Serna

Suramérica,
Sebastián Serna

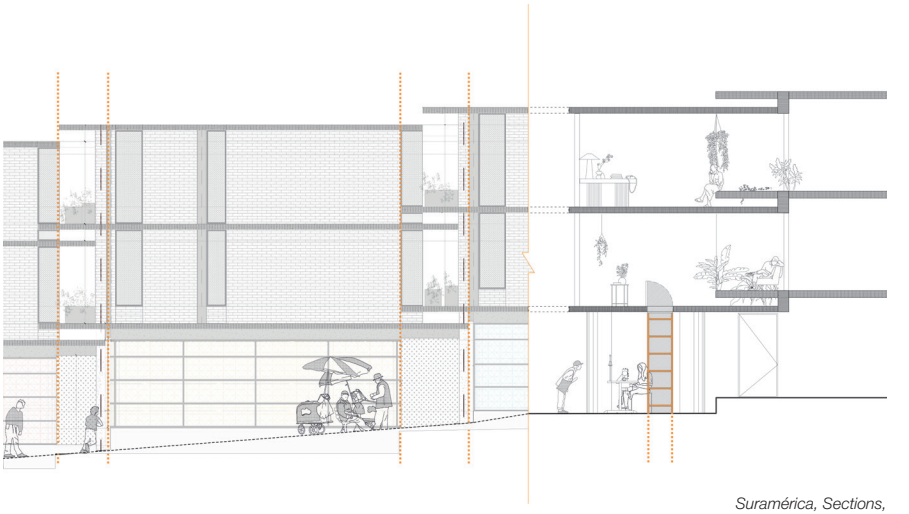
The In-Between
Where opposites coexist

At times, this place is an expansion, a joint, a threshold that allows a reconciliation of opposites. It is then a void that organizes everything, that which has no name and yet gives meaning to everything. It is in this space without program where silence prevails and pushes each individual to inhabit it with what they carry within, melancholy, desire, uncertainty. It does not contain meaning in itself, it sets it in motion. It activates something that was already there. It is a place where there is no synthesis, but coexistence, here contradictions do not disappear, they find a momentary truce.

In the *Suramérica* project, this "in-between" becomes the structuring principle of the project. There, dwelling and production are not sharply separated, they are intertwined in an ambiguous condition where the first floor can simultaneously be a workspace and an extension of the domestic, while the second floor can operate independently or in continuity.

The in-between is not a space defined by its form, it is defined by its capacity to hold unstable relationships. It is a space that does not resolve, it allows different logics, economic, social, domestic, to operate at the same time. In that sense, the void is not absence, but an active condition that articulates the life of the project.

This condition finds a direct echo in domestic life and in the history of the neighborhood's trades, where dwelling and production have historically been intertwined. The intermediate relationship between these activities is manifested in practices passed down from generation to generation, such as the making of religious sculptures in resin, which has shaped a local productive identity. This legacy is deeply linked to the influence of the Salesians, who founded in this context one of the first schools of arts and crafts in Bogotá, consolidating a culture of making that still permeates the spatial dynamics of the place.



Suramérica, Sections,
Sebastián Serna

Suramérica,
Sebastián Serna

That Which Sustains Without Appearing
Invisible Structures

There are also thresholds that sustain without appearing. It is that missing piece that, like the aleph, has no sound yet is the first letter of the alphabet. It is, in a sense, what sustains without appearing.

In our perceptual reality, we are unable to grasp that unity; we live fragmented. It is there that the importance of this space emerges, in that in-between where what is different does not resolve but is not annulled either, or in the possibility of building bridges between points that do not know each other. There would be no interval, no distance, no place for what cannot fully come together.

In the *La Garza* project,This idea manifests as a structure that does not depend on visible form, it depends on the relationships it activates. The fountain, although material, is merely the support of a broader network, the memory of the neighborhood, the history of water, the participation of artists, institutional management, the collective desire for restoration. What sustains the project is not only the physical intervention, it is the network of connections that allows that place to recover meaning. The exhibition, by bringing together works by multiple artists under the same format and price, and by concealing their authorship, shifts attention from the object to the system that makes it possible. Architecture here is not defined as form, it exists as a condition of possibility. It is a device

that organizes the invisible, the social, the symbolic, the temporal. What is unseen is precisely what sustains the experience of space. The final objective was the symbolic idea that water would flow again from a fountain that, as an object, was unconsciously tied as a landmark in the collective memory of the neighborhood.

In the *Pasajes Residenciales* project, This fragmentation is assumed as a constitutive condition of the project. The historic fabric of central Bogotá is made of discontinuities, narrow lots, typological variations, irregular voids, constructions accumulated over time. Instead of imposing a homogeneous unity, the project proposes a catalogue of variations where each building responds to a common logic but adapts to the historical typology of the place. The passage, understood as this typology, becomes the element that allows these differences to be articulated without eliminating them. It is a space that connects without unifying, that allows movement between fragments without demanding their fusion. The solid-void relationship, constant yet always different, constructs a continuity that is not formal but experiential. Unity lies in the possibility of moving through, of crossing, of relating that which does not fully come together.

Suramérica, Floor Plan, Sebastián Serna

The Step
Transition, Uncertainty, and Transformation

To be able to cross those previously mentioned thresholds, one must take a step. What does the step mean?

To be clear, We're not speaking about architecture. Internally, it is that place where fear resides. That place which is neither fully dark nor fully illuminated and that, nevertheless, must be crossed. The step is neither clear nor stable, it is uncertainty, it is transition, it is transformation. To transcend it as a possibility for inhabiting another form of knowledge. This transition is not an accumulation of facts, but rather that which occurs after knowing, when knowledge ceases to be a limit and becomes an opening.

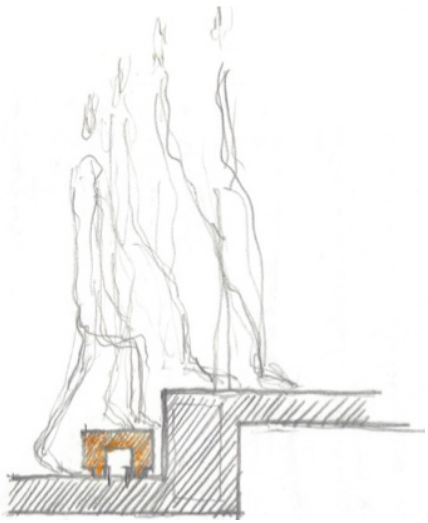
That is the place where the possibility of returning home emerges, as a recognition that occurs in movement, not a return to a fixed origin. An instant in which, without being resolved, everything seems to enter into relation.

The threshold is the lower part or the step at the entrance of a door. Metaphorically, it represents the beginning, the starting point, or the entry into a new state or place. But it is also that unstable point where one is neither fully what one was nor what one will be. A space of contradiction that does not seek resolution, it is sustained.

The step runs through all the projects as a condition rather than as an element. The *Pasajes Residenciales* project is built from the neighborhood's typology, taking these gestures and reinterpreting the historical way of building the city from a contemporary perspective. In *Suramérica*, the step shifts to the section, moving up and down implies crossing different ways of inhabiting, where production and dwelling intertwine in constant movement.

In *El otro lado de la Séptima*, the step acquires a territorial and political dimension, crossing again a city that has been fragmented by fear. And in *La Garza*, the step occurs in time, from inactivity to use, from oblivion to reactivation. In all cases, the step does not guarantee stability, it introduces a condition of continuous transformation.

It is in that movement, uncertain, incomplete, unstable, where the possibility for something to change appears, as opening, as action.



Interview:
Toward a Collective Domesticity

Fernanda Canales in conversation with Nicolás García & Natalia Riba

***Fernanda Canales** is a Mexican architect, academic, and author with advanced degrees in architecture from institutions in Madrid and Barcelona. She has gained international recognition for her architectural work, receiving awards such as the Emerging Voices Award from The Architectural League of New York and multiple honors in Mexico and abroad. Her work has been widely exhibited at major international venues including the Venice Biennale, the Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco, the Royal Academy of Arts in London, and the Chicago Architecture Biennial. She has also taught and lectured internationally, including serving as a visiting professor at the Yale School of Architecture and teaching and lecturing at institutions including Columbia University and the Architectural Association in London.*

Casa 720,
Fernanda Canales, 2020

Natalia: *In the context of "thresholds" as spaces where boundaries become porous, how do you understand the relationship between the private and the public within the home today? In My House, Your City, you propose an evolution of domestic space: would you say that the contemporary house has ceased to be a closed space and has become a space of constant negotiation?*

Fernanda: Over the last 200 years, the house has increasingly become a space that restricts coexistence. Before the Industrial Revolution, houses were important centers of production of all kinds and were places for work, education, socialization, and healthcare. People who often had no blood ties cohabited in them, and houses were understood as dynamic, active, and gregarious spaces.

The birth of industrial production moved a large portion of activities out of the domestic sphere, and the creation of the concept of the nuclear family removed a large portion of the inhabitants who once lived under the same roof. Industrialized productivity and the "sanitization" of the modern world closed the doors of houses and split the public and the private. In the book Mi casa, tu ciudad, I explain the main architectural attempts made since then to reinsert into housing the multiplicity of activities and users that houses historically always had, before work and leisure, interior and exterior, public and private, rich and poor, rural and urban were sharply divided. Today, houses need to rescue their dynamic and plural sense. They must stop being the mono-functional spaces of the modern living manual for "standard" users.

Accepting the nature of the house as a collective space, with implications that go beyond its individual or private use, and negotiating its relationship with long-term resources is becoming increasingly urgent.

Natalia: *Historically, the center of the home has shifted -from the hearth to the dining room, from the television to other forms of interaction. Today, when multiple activities coexist simultaneously, how do you understand domestic space as a constellation without a single center? What does this imply for the organization and hierarchy of the home?*

Fernanda: Following the rise of individual digital devices, the television ceased to define the central space of the home as a gathering place; instead, everyone maintains a one-on-one relationship progressively disconnected from the surrounding space and the people around them. Homes have begun to lose the "living room" as a space for interaction, replacing it with individual rooms without hierarchies or contact relationships. The loss of the home's center as a meeting point and the homogenization of individual rooms

implies not only a lack of coexistence but an absence of spaces used for anything other than sleeping and looking at a digital device.

Nicolás: *If we think of the house as an evolving "framework," capable of adapting to changing relationships and uses, what spatial or architectural strategies do you consider essential to allow for this flexibility without sacrificing quality of life?*

Fernanda: The spaces that provide the most flexibility within this logic of a flexible framework are threshold spaces-those places halfway between the interior and the exterior, the individual and the collective, which provide room for non-predetermined functions. Historically, these spaces have been balconies, terraces, porches... the sites where a dwelling can grow or shrink, open or close, and belong to one or to many. If there are no ambiguous spaces that allow for lack of definition, houses are born suffocated. It is not a problem of square footage or budgets, but of use values. Houses are becoming larger and larger, yet they house fewer people and are storing more things.

Natalia: *In the case of single-family housing-particularly in Mexico-where boundaries tend to be more defined, how do you think these threshold conditions can be introduced? What opportunities generate gradients between the domestic and the collective within an individual house?*

Fernanda: The best example of a threshold space in traditional Mexican housing, and in many parts of the world, is the courtyard (patio): a collective space onto which a series of individual bedrooms can open, connecting shared service uses such as laundry areas or kitchens.

In Mexico, the historic vecindades (tenements) are full of lessons on how low-cost housing can possess spatial generosity, mixed uses, and house a diverse public. These threshold spaces facilitate temporary uses and address changing needs. In an individual house-and even more importantly, the smaller it is-an intermediate space like a balcony or a mezzanine (tapanco) provides the breathing room for a user to personalize their space and have an extra realm, even if its dimensions are minimal. For example, projects that, instead of providing corridors, provide walkable terraces, create the possibility of using those spaces which are more open and pleasant than common hallways.

Patio: *In collective housing, what role do shared spaces play as thresholds between the individual and the common? How can these spaces activate new forms of coexistence?*

Fernanda: Generally, the only things shared in collective housing buildings are the entrance, elevators, stairs, and hallways. Little else. But more and more projects are questioning the inefficiency and the ecological costs of having blocks of 20 apartments with 20 washing machines, 20 dryers, 20 refrigerators, 20 vacuum cleaners, and 20 stoves-or 200, depending on the case.

Casa Terreno,
Fernanda Canales, 2018

Rethinking what we are willing to share opens up the possibility for new formats of coexistence and benefits.

Natalia: *In Mexico, social closeness and the warmth of everyday relationships already seem to build informal forms of community. How do you believe this cultural condition can enhance the design of shared spaces and, furthermore, drive care networks within collective housing?*

Fernanda: Worldwide, the pandemic showed us the advantages of mutual support and collective spaces toward which homes could extend. In countries where privacy is understood as isolation and, often, as confinement, the problems stemming from the lack of a housing-associated support network surfaced. In that critical time, the sense of community took on greater importance, and now this is promoting new senses of community and even new definitions of family based on new formats of coexistence. In these, different gradients of privacy are facilitated, and the boundaries between what is one's own and what belongs to everyone are extended.

In Mexico, for example, the social richness and coexistence often found in popular neighborhoods are absent in new mass-housing or luxury collective-housing buildings, which maintain a concept of isolated living. However, the lessons of traditional houses and vecindades, which were better connected and more open, are increasingly being valued.

Nicolás: *If we understand thresholds not as moments of transition but as permanent conditions, what kind of housing do you believe we need today? How should architecture respond to this evolution of contemporary lifestyles?*

Fernanda: I have attempted to answer these questions both in my academic research and books and in my architectural work. Casa 720, Casa Terreno, and Casa Bruma are exercises in rethinking the home as a collective-use entity based on relationships-both with resources and with different activities and people.

These projects began as commissions for single-family weekend houses that seemed to follow a typical isolated-individual program. In reality, they were houses that had to shelter not only the owners' family and extended family, but also the families of the permanent caretakers, disconnected from sewage or water grids-meaning they had to harvest rainwater, produce their own electricity, and reuse waste. They were exercises in rethinking the effects of houses on a shared territory and understanding that a home cannot be thought of as an isolated individual space; it must be capable of housing diverse users, workers, family, friends, and people outside that closed circle.

Achieving privacy without exclusion is one of the primary challenges for architecture.

Casa Bruma,
Fernanda Canales, 2017

A Living Threshold

Text written by Alex Hudtwalcker

***Alex Hudtwalcker** is a Peruvian architect, professor, and founder of HUDTWALCKER Arquitectos, a Lima-based practice working across architectural projects of different scales in both public and private contexts. His work moves between design practice, teaching, and research, with an interest in architecture as a cultural and territorial practice shaped by material, social, and spatial conditions. He holds a Master of Science in Advanced Architectural Design from Columbia University GSAPP, where he received the Honor Award for Excellence in Advanced Architectural Design. Since 2021, he has taught at the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, contributing to architectural education while continuing to develop his independent practice. More recently, he served as Chief Curator of the Peru Pavilion at the 19th Venice Architecture Biennale, titled Living Scaffolding, positioning his work within broader conversations on Latin American architecture, representation, and contemporary spatial practice.*

Living Scaffolding, Peru Pavilion at the 19th Venice Architecture Biennale.
Photo: Gonzalo Vera Tudela

Eric Frattini, The Uru Expedition led by Kitin Muñoz, 1988.
Photo Eric Frattini. Private Collection. Courtesy of Eric Frattini

Living Scaffolding, the exhibition of the Peru Pavilion at the 19th Venice Architecture Biennale, emerges from a condition that has long defined Latin America: the capacity to inhabit thresholds. Suspended between land and water, permanence and impermanence, reality and speculation, the project explores how architecture can exist not as a finished object but as a living system sustained collectively over time.

The exhibition intertwines two of the most extraordinary naval feats in Peruvian history — one floating and one navigating — both rooted in ancestral knowledge originating in Lake Titicaca, more than 3,800 meters above sea level. There, the Uros and Aymara communities developed sophisticated techniques for inhabiting water through the cultivation and construction of totora, a millenary endemic reed whose intelligence continues to resonate in the face of contemporary ecological and social challenges.

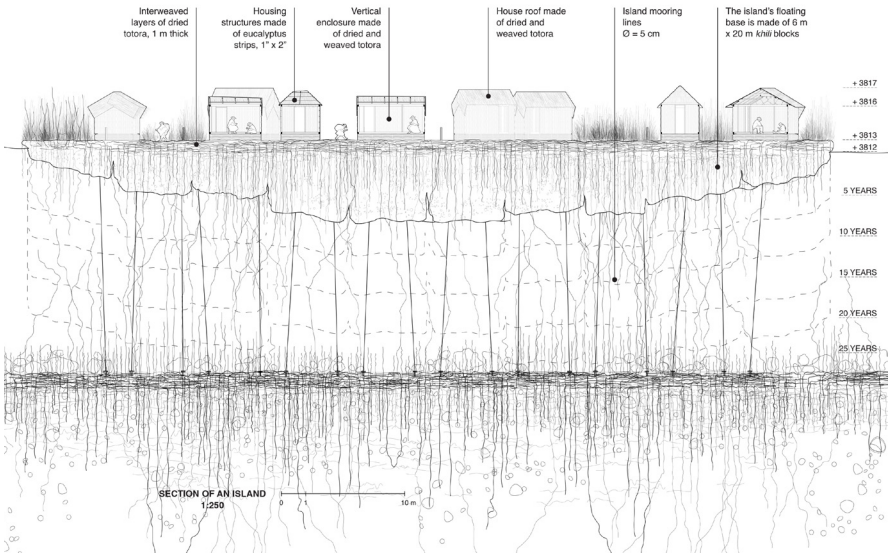
Through the refinement of totora construction, the Uros created one of the most radical forms of collective urbanism in the Americas: the floating islands of Lake Titicaca. Built from blocks of reed roots (khili) layered with dried reeds that must be constantly renewed, these platforms function simultaneously as dwelling, infrastructure, agricultural ground, and communal space. Anchored by posts and ropes beneath the water, the islands depend on continuous maintenance and collective labor, transforming architecture into an ongoing act of care.

Here, dwelling is sustained through a fragile yet resilient balance between ecology, craft, and community.

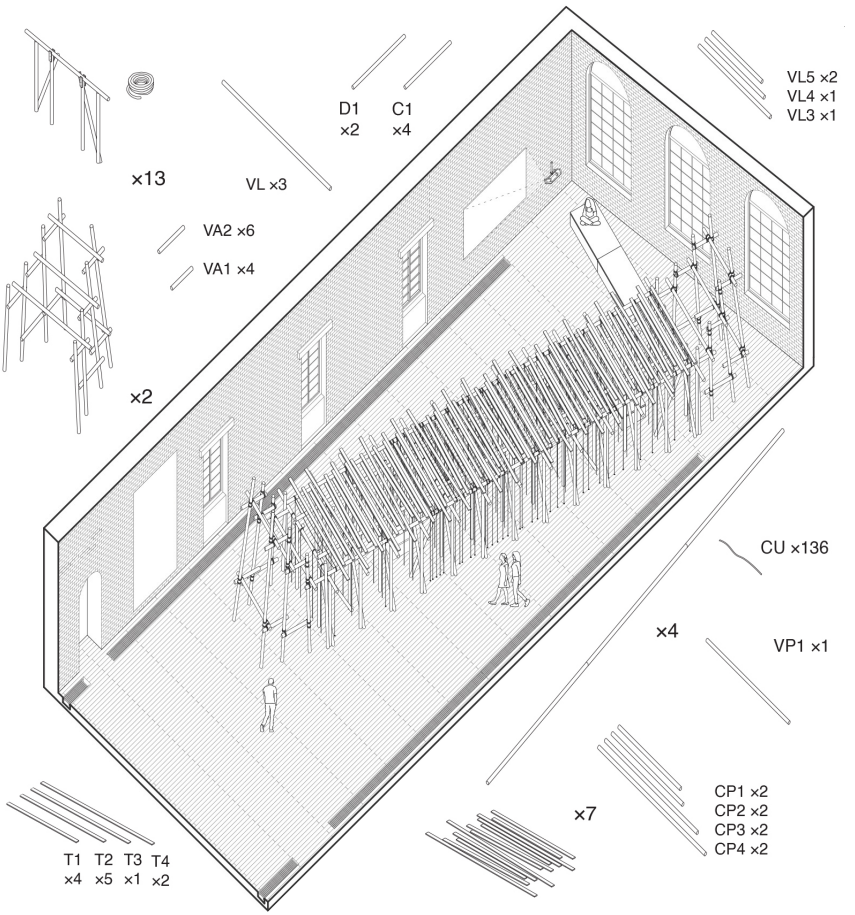
From this sacred lake, these forms of intelligence have traveled far beyond the Andes. Across the coasts of Peru, Chile, Egypt, and Iraq, expeditions led by figures such as Thor Heyerdahl and Kitín Muñoz extended a genealogy of totoravessels built by Aymara artisans from the Peruvian highlands. Among them was the Uru, a monumental reed boat that departed from Callao in 1988 and reached Polynesia after fifty-four days at sea, reopening debates surrounding possible pre-Hispanic connections between South America and Oceania. These voyages challenged geographical, cultural, and epistemological boundaries, proposing the ocean not as separation but as continuity.

At the center of the Peru Pavilion stands Living Scaffolding, a monumental wooden structure installed within the Sala d'Armi of the Arsenale, a site historically associated with Venetian shipbuilding. Measuring twenty meters in length and tilted fifteen degrees across the gallery, the scaffold divides the space into two trapezoidal chambers where audiovisual narratives of these two maritime feats unfold. Constructed from locally sourced timber, the installation consists of thirteen frames assembled with octagonal wooden poles, screws, and ropes whose knots recall the binding systems of the floating islands themselves.

Yet the scaffold is not presented merely as a construction device. Often hidden, temporary, or structurally subordinate, scaffolding here becomes spatial protagonist: an inhabitable threshold suspended between support and monument,



All drawings of the Peru Pavillion, the Uru Expedition and the Uros floating Islands were done by curatorial team:
Lead Curator: Hudtwalcker
Associate Curators: Beteta, Cillóniz & Morales
Collaborators: de la Cerna, Jara, Mendez, Paz, Reynaga, Rosas, Sáenz & Sing



infrastructure and architecture, object and landscape. Open and permeable, the structure invites visitors to move around it, cross beneath it, and occupy it physically, transforming the act of viewing into one of traversal and encounter.

Within the context of the Biennale, Living Scaffolding proposes architecture as a living condition shaped through collective intelligence accumulated over centuries of adaptation, maintenance, and environmental reciprocity. Installed within the Venetian Arsenale, the scaffold emerges as a threshold in constant negotiation: neither permanent nor temporary, neither complete nor unfinished. Like the floating islands of Titicaca or the wooden pile foundations beneath Venice, the structure reveals how resilience can emerge through instability, dissolving boundaries between nature and construction, memory and future, local knowledge and global imaginaries.

PERU
Pavilion
A
NAUTICAL
FEAT
A
FLOATING
FEAT
LIVING
SCAFFOLDING
ONE PLACE, ONE SOLUTION
UN LUOGO, UNA SOLUZIONE

Living Scaffolding, Peru Pavilion at the 19th Venice Architecture Biennale.
Photo: Cristobal Palma

In Transit

Photo Essay by Andrea Zamora

***Andrea Zamora** is a Colombian architect and designer whose work brings together architectural practice, digital experimentation, and a sensibility toward the atmospheric and emotional dimensions of space. Since completing her Master of Science in Advanced Architectural Design at Columbia University GSAPP in May 2025, she has been working at PPAA Architects in Mexico, where she contributes to architectural design projects attentive to materiality, spatial experience, and context. Andrea holds a Bachelor of Architecture from Universidad de Los Andes, where she graduated summa cum laude with a minor in Psychological Processes. Her work is driven by an interest in creating spaces through empathy, sensibility, and materiality, while exploring different morphological iterations through diverse digital tools.*

What does it mean to inhabit the threshold?

What happens when we do?

What transforms, and what remains the same?

As a child, I was often told that we usually forget where we are going when we walk through a door.

So the questions arise: what do we forget when we exist in-between?

What is remembered?

What is lost in translation?

We exist within thresholds. We do not only pass through them. We are in-transit as we move through life, and as life moves through us.

*All images are provided by Andrea Zamora

Existing in-between (35 mm)
March 2025: Guajarat, India

What lies ahead, beyond, within, in us? (35 mm)
March 2025: Guajarat, India

Answers to Unasked Questions (35 mm)
March 2025: Guajarat, India

The act of remembering and being remembered (35 mm)
July 2025: Bogotá, Colombia

Imprints (35 mm)
December 2025: In-Transit, Japan

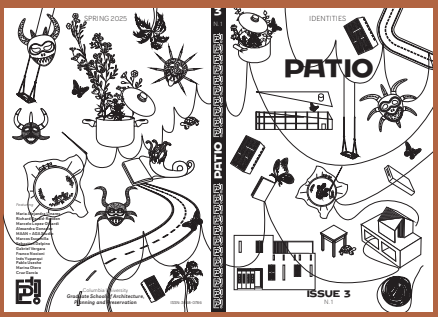
That's it?!

I wish I could stay on this Patio forever.

Stay tuned for future Issues of Patio,
or look for us in our previous Issues:

Alterity (2021)

Real Talk (2022)



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